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ABSTRACT

The use and effectiveness of personal development plans (PDPs) in planning career and skill development activities for individuals within employing organizations in the United Kingdom was examined through case studies of seven firms and telephone interviews with representatives of seven other firms. The case studies/interviews focused on the following key issues for practitioners involved in developing PDPs: philosophy; scope and content of PDPs as vehicles for self-organized learning; relationship between the focus of PDPs and their links with other processes; implementation and support; ownership, control, and confidentiality; and impact. Most firms had all employees develop PDPs; however, some limited their use of PDPs to managers or white-collar staff. All PDPs covered similar areas but varied in the amount of guidance given to users regarding defining areas for development and development actions. Nine guidelines for developers of PDPs were formulated, including the following: make the key outcomes sought from introducing PDPs clear to all parties; make the processes used to generate PDPs realistic in terms of target group and level of available resources; and avoid focusing solely on skill development for employees' current jobs. (Appended are the interview schedule and information about the 14 firms studied. The bibliography contains 54 references.) (MN)

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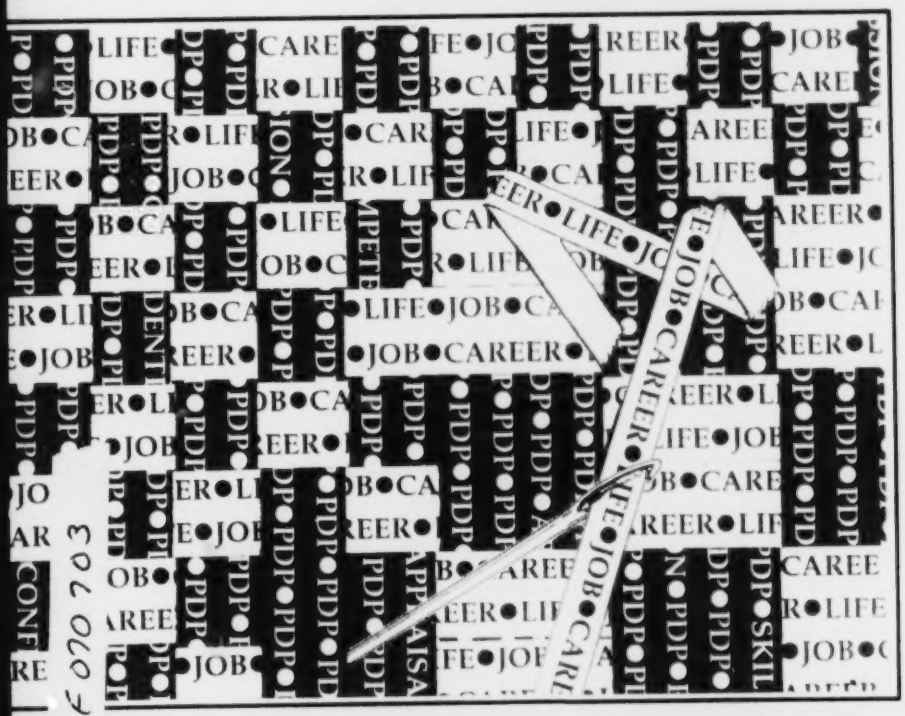
P Tamkin, L Barber, W Hirsh



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Executive Summary

Personal development plans (PDPs) have evolved as a particular approach to planning career and skill development activities for individuals within employing organisations. The concept of a PDP is of a clear development action plan for an individual. It may well include some plans for formal training, but is also likely to include a wider set of development activities *eg* coaching, project working or action learning, secondment, self-study or distance learning, and developmental career moves. The other core concept in the PDP approach is that the individual takes primary responsibility for the plan. Line managers and the HR function often have a supporting role.

Although the idea of personal development planning is not new, especially to those in education and training, there does seem to have been a rapid increase in the number of large organisations seeking to introduce some kind of PDP scheme. Organisations no longer feel they can take prime responsibility for the careers and development of their employees, and the PDP approach clearly puts the development ball in the employee's court. It also fits comfortably with other business processes, such as total quality initiatives, which are both devolved and dependent upon the commitment of individuals to positive change.

The study

The research study reported here was undertaken because of this rise in interest in PDPs, and because relatively little appeared to be known of how such schemes were working in practice. It builds on other IES research both into self-development in general, and particular career development processes.

The research was undertaken with the support of the IES Co-operative Research Programme. This is a mechanism through which a group of IES Subscribers finance, and often participate in, applied research on employment issues.

The study examined the practical application of PDPs through the experience of fourteen case study organisations. Eight of these had significant experience of implementing PDPs and are reported as detailed named case studies. They are: Royal Mail Anglia, Guardian Royal Exchange, Scottish Power, TSB, BP Chemicals, Marks & Spencer, The Wellcome Foundation and

Abbey National. Information for seven of the named case studies was obtained not just from the HR function but also from line managers and employees and, in some cases, analysis of samples of real completed PDPs (nearly a hundred in total). The other case studies provided more limited information through telephone interviews.

Findings

The main text of the report deals with PDPs in terms of content, target group and focus; process issues in implementation and support; linkages between PDPs and other HR processes; and the impact of PDP schemes on the organisation. In this summary we pull together some of the key issues arising from the research under the following headings:

- scope and content of PDPs
- the relationship between the focus of PDPs and their links with other processes
- implementation and support
- ownership, control and confidentiality
- impact.

Scope and content of PDPs

The majority of the case studies intended PDPs to be used by all staff, although some only covered managers or 'white collar' staff. This was often a function of the length of time the scheme had been in operation and the way in which PDPs were created. As some of the processes by which PDPs are created are expensive, for example development centres and development programmes, it is unlikely that any organisation could afford to use such methods for all staff. Such activities tend to be reserved for managers, graduates, or those judged to have high potential. Appraisal was the most common means of creating PDPs in organisations that were either using the initiative for all staff or were intending to do so. This is usually a process which covers everyone.

The PDP forms used by the case study organisations covered very similar areas but varied in the amount of guidance they gave to users in terms of defining areas for development and development actions. Some forms specified the definition of development *needs* under each of the organisation's key competences, whereas others would leave it to individuals to express their development needs. Similarly, some forms would encourage the expression of development *actions* under particular headings such as training, open learning, job moves and coaching, in contrast to others which left it to individuals to think through how their development needs might best be met.

Nearly all the case study organisations were using competences as a framework to assist individuals articulate development needs. Some were also using a number of other psychometric questionnaires, or forms of 360 degree review, to assist individuals reflect on their current strengths and weaknesses.

The focus of the PDP and links with other processes

A personal development plan can vary considerably in focus. A plan may concentrate purely on development needed to perform better in the current job. It may extend to development required for the next career step or longer term career options. It may take a much more holistic or person based approach, encouraging the individual to think about their personal effectiveness and life/career issues and to consider a correspondingly wider range of development needs, not restricted to those relevant to the current job.

This issue of focus was very important to how the individual employees perceived their scheme. By and large employees felt more satisfied by a development planning process which takes their wider personal aspirations on board. From the employees' perspective it can be seen as a contradiction in terms to be encouraged to think about their own development in their own way, but then be told to concentrate only on their needs in relation to the current job.

The processes which feed into PDPs tend to have a bearing on focus. Development centres and development programmes tend to be 'person centred' or holistic in approach. Appraisal tends to be more current job or 'next job step' based. Although appraisal based PDPs may be easier to implement for the whole workforce, the downside of this approach may be this tendency to take a narrow view of development.

The expected application of the PDP will also affect its focus. All of the case study organisations were using PDPs as a means of securing development outcomes. Expectations about types of development outcome sometimes affected the design of the form and led employees, for example, to couch needs in terms of training rather than job experience. Two of the case studies linked PDPs with succession planning and this tended to lead to development outcomes couched in terms of desired job moves.

Implementation and support

PDP schemes present two serious challenges in terms of implementation and support. Firstly, a scheme which is intended to apply to all individuals, and often involve all their line managers, requires a major effort of communication and training support to actually reach its intended audience.

The second major challenge is that self-organised learning is not part of the UK tradition. Even if they have a pile of documents on the scheme, employees may still need help — at least the first time — in thinking through their own development needs. This may be why individuals find it is easier to complete a PDP in the context of a development centre or as part of a management development programme. Both these activities offer considerable support.

In addition to supporting implementation and the first round of PDPs, support will be needed to maintain interest in the scheme and encourage plans to be reviewed and updated. Most of the case study organisations expected line managers to be involved in discussing and actioning PDPs, but it may be unrealistic to expect all the momentum to come from the line at a time when they are often feeling overstretched. Additional support in some of the organisations was provided by mentors or, in one case (of PDPs produced on a development programme), by groups of participants keeping in touch with each other's progress as part of their action learning approach.

Ownership, control and confidentiality

Another set of issues is raised by our assumptions about who really owns the planning process, who owns the PDPs and how such information should be used within organisations.

Is it appropriate that a process ostensibly created to encourage individuals to develop themselves should be controlled by the organisation at all? Some of the case studies did not know anything about the take up of their scheme, and felt it was not appropriate to do so. Some monitored take up, but did not seek to collect completed PDPs. Some did attempt a degree of control, often originally to get the scheme embedded, but telling people 'You must produce a personal development plan' really is rather a contradiction in terms. This creates problems for those schemes which are designed to feed into processes such as job filling and succession planning.

The other problem with schemes which use the PDP as an input to job applications or succession is the impact of such linkages on the degree of confidentiality of the PDP and therefore on the degree of honesty the individual can bring to it.

Impact

The impact which the case study organisations wanted to see from personal development planning was predominantly the culture change away from the organisation owning individual development towards employees feeling they were responsible for their own development. In some cases attitudinal measures were starting to register such a shift. Other outcomes sought included a more adventurous approach to development

methods, usually away from courses to more job-related approaches, including more lateral job moves. Measuring take-up of a PDP scheme will not be very easy if the forms remain private to the individual. Confidential sample surveys may be a better approach for getting information both on take up and perceived value. Employees and managers participating in the research were mainly enthusiastic about the PDP approach and its link with business development. However, as always with HR processes, few of even this vanguard had really evaluated their schemes. For some it was still to early to have done so.

Lessons for practitioners

In conclusion, what tips can this study suggest to those introducing a PDP scheme?

- The key outcomes sought from introducing PDPs — including cultural change — need to be clear to all those involved, and built in at every stage of design and implementation.
- The introduction of the scheme — whether 'big bang' or 'softly, softly' — should take account of the target group and the prevailing attitudes to employee development.
- The process used to generate plans must be realistic in terms of the target group of employees and the level of resources available to the scheme.
- If PDPs are expected to flow out of appraisal, the design of an appraisal scheme should take this into account by building in sufficient time for discussion of individual development.
- PDPs which focus solely on skill development for the current job will not be welcomed by many employees. Those which take a broader view of the individual and their future may be more effective in encouraging flexibility and have a higher impact on employees.
- Frameworks (including competences) and instruments for assisting in self-assessment (including psychometric tests) can be very valuable in helping employees to think about their PDPs. However, the PDP form itself should not be too highly structured as this will constrain the user.
- If the organisation really wants employees to own their own development, it will have to achieve a critical balance between encouragement and control.
- Formal use of PDPs in other processes such as selection or succession planning will affect the content and confidentiality of the plans, and therefore should be carefully considered.
- A PDP scheme will not sell itself or maintain itself. A planned and realistic approach to supporting the scheme is crucial. This has cost implications.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Personal development plans (PDPs) are a relative newcomer to the portfolio of popular HR initiatives. The idea of a PDP is the simple notion of a clear action plan for personal development, which will normally include training action but may be much broader than this. PDPs appear to sit comfortably with the current emphasis on empowerment and employee involvement, and initiatives like Total Quality Management which emphasise continuous improvement, shared vision and values and employee responsibility. With such initiatives relying on individual autonomy, PDPs complement and contribute to this overall approach. The essence of PDPs is that ownership of development rests very firmly with the individual, the individual is often primarily responsible for formulating the development plan, for actioning that plan and for updating it. Others have a role in this process, such as line managers or HR specialists but they are partners in the creation and actioning of the development plan or support the individual in its achievement.

Despite their timely appeal, PDPs have received comparatively little research attention. Like many such initiatives there is some confusion as to exactly what they are, how they are introduced and what support they require. In fact it may be difficult to understand what differentiates them from the development action plans that have quite commonly been an integral part of appraisal schemes. Because PDPs are gaining rapidly in popularity and because some organisations seem to be having difficulty implementing them, IES obtained support from its Co-operative Research Programme (funded by major employers) to look at PDPs more closely.

1.2 Objectives

The objective of the research project reported here was to shed light on both the ideas behind the introduction of PDPs and their practical application. We also hoped to identify factors that influence success and to understand possible problems.

This research builds on previous work at IES in helping organisations implement employee self-development, in

addressing some of the broader issues involved in such a strategy (Jackson, 1990) and studies of particular careers processes such as succession planning (Hirsh, 1990) and development centres (Jackson and Yeates, 1993).

This report is based on the experiences of 14 organisations in both the public and private sector which have been using personal development plans. The research was carried out in the first half of 1994 and it addressed a number of specific issues in the case study organisations:

- context to the introduction of PDPs
- employee coverage of the PDP approach
- content and structure of PDPs
- processes by which PDPs are produced
- implementation of the PDP approach
- impact and evaluation

The research aim was to use the experience of the case study organisations to identify and explore factors influencing the impact of a PDP initiative.

1.3 Methodology

There were three main stages to the research:

Firstly, a review of the literature was conducted to identify themes and the theoretical base of personal development. The literature review was also used to identify potential case study organisations.

Secondly, having identified organisations from the literature that were active in PDPs these were contacted and asked to participate in the research study. Simultaneously, subscriber organisations to IES were approached to determine their current involvement in PDPs and their willingness to participate. In total we contacted approximately 50 organisations. Nineteen organisations expressed an interest in participating in the study and these were briefly interviewed by telephone, to gain an understanding of their application of PDPs. From these contacts seven organisations were selected for visits and a further seven for longer telephone interviews. These organisations were selected on the basis of a number of factors such as:

- the business sector they represented
- their experience of using PDPs
- the process by which the PDP was arrived at
- usage of inputs such as competences frameworks

In the course of the visits, interviews were carried out with HR specialists to gather background information on the scheme, and group discussions were held with line managers and users of PDPs to gain their perspective. In those organisations that were selected for a telephone interview, our interviewees were the appropriate HR specialists. For both the visits and the telephone studies, the interviews used a semi-structured discussion guide covering the key issues, with sufficient flexibility to probe organisation-specific details. The interview discussion guide is shown in Appendix A.

The third stage reviewed samples of blank and completed PDPs from the case study organisations, to gain an insight into the differences between companies, in the way individuals recorded development needs and the kinds of development actions they contained. All of our case study companies were able to give us blank PDPs so that we might understand better the way individuals were asked to express their development needs. Acquiring completed PDPs was more difficult for various reasons. For many of our telephone case studies their scheme had only very recently been introduced and completed PDPs were not yet available, for others completed forms were not collated by a central source or were felt to be highly confidential and personal to the individual. Three of our case studies were able to provide us with a total of over 90 anonymous, completed PDPs which we analysed for both the kinds of development needs expressed and the way in which these needs are to be addressed.

1.4 Literature review

The literature on personal development plans divides into two main camps: that which is primarily focused on the theories underpinning personal development in the organisational context, and that which gives an account of how organisations have used personal development plans in practice.

Theoretical perspective

The theoretical perspective has relevance to PDPs in two main ways, the first relevant body of literature deals with personal learning.

Self managed learning or self organised learning is a concept that is growing in popularity. Several authors have referred to its value in a time of change, of the demands for increasing flexibility, of increasing autonomy and responsibility as organisations adopt the principles of TQM or engage in delayering. It is also a principle that has gained support within the HR or training function, as many organisations have devolved HR responsibility to the line or have looked to cut the costs of central personnel or training units. Self-managed

learning places the emphasis on the individual and therefore appears to offer an approach to meeting development needs in these leaner times.

Abbott and Dahmus (1992) describe self managed learning as a self directed and self motivated process, important for the 1990s because of the turbulent work environment. But they also point out that not everyone will be equally prepared to work this way and some people may prefer 'other directed' learning methods. If organisations are likely to move towards self managed learning, then they would benefit from knowing if it is a method that will work for them. They discuss a means of measuring an individual's readiness for self-directed learning devised by Guglielmino (1977, and reported in Abbott and Dahmus, 1992), which implies that there are critical sub-factors such as creativity, self-confidence in own learning ability, initiative and future orientation.

Knowles (1989) argues that all individuals are naturally self directed learners even if they may need some help initially to get started, an approach reflected in the learner-centred development of Bruce-Dodge (1989) which is underpinned by the assumption that adults are motivated to learn. Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1992) discuss a specific technique of learning conversations to support self-organised learning. These learning conversations are assisted by a learning coach initially, and therefore are externalised, but eventually become internal discussions involving reflection and analysis of actions. Mossman and Stewart (1988) discuss how self-managed learning (SML), enables managers to be more aware of how they achieve results, control their own learning and work with other managers. They note that self-managed learning programmes often produce a gradual shift of focus from the managerial skin to the whole person underneath. They suggest SML is achieved via sets with a facilitator within which individuals develop learning contracts. Fritchie and Skinner (1988) lend further support with regard to focusing on the self from their work with women's groups; they assert that part of self development is about self-understanding.

The second key set of literature is that concerning the learning organisation. This is a concept that has been developed by Pedlar and Burgoyne (1988), Garrat (1988) and Senge (1990) with somewhat varied emphasis. The learning organisation has been described as one that continually transforms itself, where the individuals and teams within it are constantly searching for better ways of doing things, where individuals have a shared vision, where synergy flows and the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts. Within this framework, individual learning is a key step to the learning organisation; 'Organisations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does not guarantee organisational learning. But without it no organisational learning occurs' (Senge, 1990). Pedlar, Boydell

and Burgoyne (1988) define the learning organisation as: 'an organisation which facilitates the learning of all its members and continually transforms itself'. On the same theme, Garrat discusses how the current emphasis on delayering reduces the numbers of middle managers and thereby increases the responsibility of senior manages to develop the learning abilities of individuals and groups.

The crucial jump from individual development to the learning company is discussed by Burgoyne (1988) as dependent on the channelling of the energies of managers in a way that meets organisational needs. Senge (1990), meanwhile, places the emphasis on the development of systems thinking, the ability to see problems in terms of complex and interrelated wholes.

The application of personal development plans

The literature search also uncovered a range of literature on organisations' experiences of using personal development plans. From this emerged different approaches to the creation and maintenance of PDPs. Several literature items pointed to the appraisal or performance management system as being the most popular process through which the PDP was generated. For some companies the link with appraisal was direct and for others was separated in time. National and Provincial (Pickup, 1990) had developed a competences based system where individual objectives were closely linked to the business plan. It was against these objectives that individuals were appraised and PDPs created. The DVLA (Barry, 1991) split the development review into two, one concentrating on the skills and knowledge needed for personal development, the other concentrating on the future and career development. Customs and Excise (Stewart and Page, 1992) similarly built PDPs which relied on knowledge and skills appraisal, after an attempt to introduce competences received immense resistance from the line. Managers reacted to the language and concept of competences and could see no benefit in moving from defining people and jobs in terms of knowledge and skills requirements.

Other schemes are still closely linked with appraisal, but personal development planning does not occur at the same time as the performance appraisal. Pedigree Petfoods' system commences with a personal review and learning plan leading to job planning and then career planning (Roobottom and Winkless, in Pedler *et al.*, 1988). Similarly American Express (Miller, in Pedler *et al.*, 1988) commences with self-analysis of own skills, knowledge and experience, motivation and career. The appraisal follows this in a partnership with the line manager. This close involvement of the manager also characterises the scheme at Nuffield Hospitals (Wilson and Cole, 1990) where the manager acts as counsellor, mentor and coach, and at Harvey Hotels (Beckert and Walsh, 1991) which involve regular interactive review discussions with the manager. At

British Petroleum Exploration (Moravic and Tucker, 1991) part of the input used by managers to create their own PDP is upward appraisal by their own staff.

The other device often used to stimulate production of a PDP is a development centre, although these are often reserved for more senior employees. In Yorkshire Water (IRRR, 1993) the development discussion follows various psychometric tests and group exercises, and leads to a PDP. In British Telecom (Knightly, 1992) development centres are used to assess and develop certain 'soft' skills such as learning ability, an holistic approach to problem solving and personal flexibility. In National Westminster Bank, a development programme for high fliers builds up a personal learning plan from identified strengths and development needs (Cumber, 1986) with which individuals receive support from mentors.

In addition to these somewhat traditional ways of encouraging individuals to consider personal development, there were some examples in the literature of more radical approaches. The Post Office undertook an experiment into Self Organised Learning reported by Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1992). Operational supervisors participated in a scheme that encouraged them to develop skill in internal learning conversations, using each other and the authors as facilitators. The authors reported encouraging results, with individuals becoming more creative and productivity increasing. TSB (Taylor, 1992) have attempted to shift their culture to continuous self managed learning through five complementary initiatives. The first of these was a policy and strategy, supported by a continuous learning package called 'Discovering Learning'. This, in turn, was supported by a directory of learning resources and a development framework that included action learning and mentoring. Finally, a performance management system that emphasised counselling and coaching skills was introduced.

Emerging themes

The literature showed some of the ways in which adult learning theories have seeped into general application in organisations. We expected this influence might show in attitudes to the development of individuals as an end in itself. Learning may also be seen as a means towards cultural and organisational change such as movement towards the learning company. We were interested in whether organisations were applying these theories in practice and how this would show in the way the case study organisations positioned their PDP approaches.

The research was primarily intended, however, to give an insight into the practical application of PDPs. On this more practical note we were interested to investigate further the origination of personal development plans from other HR processes, to see if appraisal remained the most popular means

by which PDPs were created, and to review the role of development centres and other processes in leading to PDPs. Other features that distinguished between schemes in the literature, included the use of competences as a conceptual framework for thinking about skills and therefore development, the role of mentors or facilitators, and the use of peer group support. Our research was designed to cover the importance of these in the organisations we visited. We also hoped to investigate other issues not covered by the literature, such as the importance of top level commitment; the securing of line commitment; the support given to both individuals and line managers in the process; sustaining the momentum after a scheme is launched; and the practical impact of personal development plans on other HR processes such as training, succession planning, selecting staff for project groups and so on.

1.5 Report structure

This chapter has covered the methodology used in the study and themes emerging from the literature. Chapter 2 presents the findings from the detailed case studies and summarises the issues emerging from the organisations which participated in telephone interviews. Chapter 3 summarises the findings of the research (including the analysis of PDPs collected) and leads, in Chapter 4, to a wider discussion of issues and some suggestions for practitioners.

2. Case Studies

The case study reports which form the basis for this chapter present a fairly detailed look at how PDPs have been implemented in eight of the fourteen case study companies. These organisations have all been using PDPs for some time, although many of them have changed their original scheme, or the process by which PDPs are produced, over time. In the seven case studies we visited, interviews were held with HR specialists responsible for the PDP initiative and discussion groups were held with line managers and users of the PDP scheme. In the eighth case study we conducted a telephone interview with HR specialists. This section also contains a summary of the other seven telephone interviews we conducted. We were able to obtain additional blank PDP forms from all the case study organisations. These are summarised into various types in Chapter 3. In three cases we were also able to analyse samples of completed, anonymous PDPs, the results of which are integrated in the reports of the case studies.

2.1 Detailed Case Studies

Each of the case studies is presented in the same way; we begin by giving some background information to the introduction of the scheme and the reasons for the initiative; we then examine the characteristics of the PDP scheme, its coverage, content and the means by which an individual's PDP is created. We also examine how the organisation launched the initiative, who was involved, how employees were informed and prepared and how the commitment of line managers was encouraged. Finally, we review the impact of the scheme and the effects it has had, both tangible and intangible.

The key findings from these case studies are summarised in table format in Appendix B.

Case Study 1: Royal Mail Anglia

Background

PDPs were introduced in 1992, after a major change initiative called 'Business Development'. As a result of this process, Royal Mail re-organised into geographical Divisions and all managers were put through an assessment centre process to determine their suitability for new management roles. This was clearly a major undertaking for any organisation and, in one the size of Royal Mail, created a period of stress and uncertainty. As a consequence many managers were placed in different jobs, some at a lower grade than previously and, although salaries were protected, aspirations were often frustrated. personal development plans arose as the tool to provide access to development for individuals following the assessment process. They were also introduced to give individuals more responsibility for their own development and as a catalyst to move the business away from a development culture predominately based on training. The introduction was not an easy one, however, as their association with the 'Business Development' process caused them to be viewed with suspicion. PDPs also initially met resistance from managers who were given the task of conducting a separate discussion with individuals to assess development needs.

Also around this time, the Royal Mail launched an employee strategy which reinforced the message of individual responsibility for development and gave strong encouragement for employees to pursue professional qualifications.

Coverage, content and process

The PDP scheme in Anglia covers approximately 1,800 employees out of total employee numbers of 17,000. PDPs are completed by administrative, clerical, engineering and supervisory staff. The scheme has not yet been used for operational, *ie* mail sorting and delivery staff. The scheme is completely voluntary although at implementation a target was set for 80 per cent coverage in the target groups by 1995.

The form itself consists of general headings and gives skills lists, rather than formally created competences, as prompts. The emphasis is on the whole individual, based on the role they are currently filling and the longer term. Softer qualities of self are touched upon but not deeply. The form encourages managers and the individual to look at training needs, and consequently training is often given as the solution to a particular development need. To reduce this training bias, a new PDP is being piloted which will place more emphasis on other forms of

development such as mentoring, work shadowing and distance learning.

The PDP follows the appraisal process but is meant to be separated from the appraisal in time. In the current scheme, the form is signed off by the individual and their manager and returned to the central Training and Development Unit. The new scheme will only require a course request form to be signed off and returned to the training unit. Anglia are also in the process of launching a new leadership programme on which participants will create a PDP. To support employees, a mentoring programme has been initiated but this is still at an early stage.

Training needs identified and actioned from completed PDPs link into a succession planning process. Information from this process is used to highlight development gaps and likely future needs from the business viewpoint and therefore is complementary to the PDP.

Implementation

The original PDP scheme was 'team worked' (in line with the Division's TQM policy) to a very tight timescale set by Business Development. The launch was accompanied by workshops on the principles and purpose of the scheme and how to use it. Managers we spoke to felt that this was sufficient, although they acknowledged that there was some resistance as it was felt to involve much more work.

The new scheme was similarly developed in consultation with others, including the Board and senior personnel staff. This version will be piloted before its launch. On-going support is provided via the induction programme and by the training unit.

Impact and evaluation

Royal Mail Anglia has developed an employee opinion survey, which amongst a number of indicators asks very specific questions on the capability of managers to support development and whether development needs are met. Surveys in March 1993 and March 1994 showed that employees' satisfaction with training had increased.

Initial evaluation of PDPs showed that the majority of development actions were expressed as training courses (95 per cent), and concern was expressed by the central HR unit that many of these were not sufficiently focused. It was hoped that the new cascade of business plans would help align individuals to business plans more clearly. Managers acknowledged that the culture had shifted enormously: the scheme helped start development conversations and raised awareness. It was, however, still perceived as an annual event, something the new scheme hoped to address by stressing the continuous nature of

the process. The new scheme is currently being piloted and is designed to embrace other initiatives, for example a 'Leadership Charter'. It has also been specifically focused to address areas of perceived general development need, such as forward planning. It now contains a year planner and encourages individuals to collect ongoing evidence of learning opportunities and to assess and appreciate their significance. Feedback from the pilot stage has been very positive.

In discussions on the effects of the current scheme, managers believed that the PDP scheme was contributing to an increased emphasis on the role of manager as coach and changing expectations of management behaviour. Individuals' perceptions of the scheme were that it made their development more focused and meaningful, and that it gave a vehicle to address difficulties in the current job or career. They had also experienced an improved perception of themselves as a result of thinking through the skills they possessed which they felt made them more employable.

Despite the difficulties surrounding the introduction of PDPs, there has been remarkable progress and the value of the scheme has enabled it to overcome its initial negative associations. It has also become more accepted by line managers and many now see its value in developing staff.

Case Study 2: Guardian Royal Exchange

Background

Guardian has introduced PDPs gradually since 1986. Their first major use was in helping delegates to development workshops to plan their subsequent personal development. These workshops initially covered senior managers, but have now spread to other levels in the organisation, although there are still only a limited number of places available.

More recently, PDPs have been incorporated into the documentation supporting Guardian's Management Performance Standards (MAPS). MAPS is a combination of MCI levels 1 and 2 with Guardian's own personal competences model (derived with the assistance of consultants for use in the development workshops). The standards were introduced to provide a better focus for the development of management ability. Finally, the use of PDPs was promoted throughout the organisation when they were made part of the standard appraisal documentation for all staff in 1992. The Development Workshop, MAPS and appraisal processes (incorporating PDPs) were presented to and approved by the Executive following development by HR.

PDPs are seen in Guardian not as a separate initiative but as a means within other development processes to ensure that relevant action takes place. Indeed, when talking to non-HR people in Guardian, it was found that they did not readily distinguish between the PDP concept and the systems within which PDPs are used. This was especially true of appraisal.

Coverage, content and process

The principal use of PDPs is within appraisal, as the corporate appraisal system covers all 7,000 employees. Within this system, the completion of PDPs is strongly encouraged such that there has to be a particular reason for an individual not to complete a PDP. Indeed, managers we spoke to believed PDPs to be compulsory. Completed forms are retained by the individual and the line manager. The training officer also gets a copy to assess training needs.

The appraisal system requires both the manager and employee to complete forms focusing on the individual's competences and performance requirements. The development needs identified are then used to create personal development plans. Up to a maximum of three development needs are pursued at any one time in a rolling programme.

The appraisal and resultant PDP tends to focus on the current job, but not exclusively. The career review that often follows the appraisal, enables development needs for achieving future aspirations to be explored and worked into development plans. The development actions are classified under three headings: Experience, Open learning and Workshops. Where appropriate, the training officer follows up development plans. Most needs are met in-house including open access to the learning resource centre.

PDPs are also created as a result of development centres/ workshops. These are limited to those with perceived managerial potential. Over the course of two and a half days, individuals are assessed against nine personal competence criteria. Four to six weeks after the workshop the delegate, their line manager and someone from HR meet to discuss development needs and create a development plan. The workshops operate at three levels according to seniority, with different emphasis given to strategy and operational management in each.

Guardian were able to let us see six anonymous, completed PDPs. These were analysed and showed that development needs were equally expressed in terms of knowledge, job related skills and personal skills. Development actions to meet these needs were most frequently expressed as job based activities and self study/open learning.

Implementation

The concept of PDPs was piloted to some extent through the development events. The later MAPS and appraisal initiatives (incorporating PDPs) were supported by manuals for all managers. Each launch happened gradually unit by unit and was accompanied by a staff circular and an entry in the in-house newspaper.

Managers admitted to being reticent at first about the new appraisal system because of all the extra paperwork, and also initially confused by the changes to a well established format. All the managers we spoke to had experienced a large increase in time taken to conduct and write up the appraisals. The consensus was that the discussions with individuals were taking around five hours and the writing up was predominately taking place at home. Encouragingly, the extra managerial burden was felt to be worth the effort.

On-going support is provided by training events, the manuals and an appraisee guide. HR can also be called in by units for support. Managers commented that they were not always sure what training was available, as a new guide had not been issued at that time. This has now been addressed.

Impact and evaluation

The HR specialists in Guardian perceived that PDPs (within Development Workshops, MAPS and appraisal) had brought a number of direct benefits, specifically a greater sense of purpose. Individuals we spoke to also believed that development was now much more focused, and the competences framework had meant that areas of weakness could no longer be ignored. Individuals commented that they had seen a personal improvement in their performance against the competences framework. An internal in-depth review of appraisal had been undertaken by HR which showed that generally the scheme was working, was being completed well and was liked by appraisees. Another review had shown that use of the Resource Centre had tripled. Managers' views varied; one spoke of overwhelming enthusiasm and team spirit generated by the MAPS and appraisal initiatives, another felt that there had been little effect. Generally, managers felt the scheme was less enthusiastically received by those who had plateaued in terms of their career, and that therefore PDPs should be applied with discretion. Some sections had seen an increase in sideways job moves and there was a general perception that interpersonal skills had improved and consequently team working had improved also. As one manager pointed out, the new appraisal system draws attention to personal skills which the previous system did not. This was felt to be an important benefit.

Individuals commented that commitment can be difficult to maintain. The PDP format is constructed to prompt review but in practice follow up varies widely. Use of PDPs also varied; in some areas everyone was enthusiastic, in others some individuals had plateaued and did not want to know. Take-up in different sections varied from 100 per cent to around 60 per cent. Managers generally believed the initiatives had worked well and felt that the commitment and enthusiasm from the top had helped.

Overall, the users of PDPs felt that the culture of developing people was moving in the right direction and that more development initiatives were happening.

Case Study 3: Scottish Power

Background

Following privatisation in 1991, the Company re-organised into ten separate divisions. In the past three years there has been a drive to develop an ethos of personal accountability, with managers accepting greater responsibility for their areas of work. The concept of personal accountability was highlighted by the Chief Executive as a main focus for management development. The new HR director championed the resultant initiatives of PDPs and career development.

There were two key elements to the HR strategy: a culture change programme putting greater emphasis on the development of the individual, and an employee relations strategy aimed at building a partnership with the trade unions based on the need to establish best in class, business focused, conditions of service.

The cultural change demanded of managers should not be underestimated and there were aspects of this change programme which required significantly new management behaviours.

Coverage, content and process

The approach to personal development planning in Scottish Power is a generic one embraced by a number of initiatives. PDPs are currently completed by the more senior managers via the performance management and appraisal process (around 200 individuals); graduates through the graduate development programme and others with potential or who feel they are stuck in career terms. In several of the divisions, the appraisal process only covers managers and supervisory staff which were the original target group. In other divisions the process has been cascaded down to all staff There are close links between the appraisal process and the creation of PDPs. For managers, the PDP is closely related to the competences used in the appraisal process and these are predominately focused on the current job. Those created in the development workshops tend to be more future orientated and the latest development workshops in the Generation Wholesale Division are very much whole person based.

The new performance management and appraisal process was based on the concept of management objectives alongside competences — a scheme developed with the line in a total quality team. Both merit and performance pay for managers are linked to the appraisal. One consequence of this is that the appraisal interview can be an inappropriate vehicle for

development discussions. Subsequently, a separate personal development review was introduced to take place two to three months after the appraisal itself. PDPs are an outcome of this development review, signed off by the manager and individual with a joint responsibility for actioning. The PDP action and appraisal data from the most senior people, are used as part of the succession planning process. This operates through various review meetings at business unit level and annually with Chief Operating Officers. They look at key individuals and produce the annual succession plan for the business as a whole, and nominations for management development programmes. Succession planning is reserved for the most senior individuals and posts.

An alternative source of PDPs is via self development workshops which have different emphases in different divisions. The Information Systems division concentrates on assessing individual performance against competence statements and includes the use of psychometric tests. For example the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ) is used as a 360 degree feedback instrument. Candidates are given feedback throughout the workshop and think through ways to enhance performance. Originally, managers acted as assessors but now this role is undertaken by project leaders who have been through the development workshop themselves. This helped the process, as these individuals were more empathetic to the candidate's needs and more enthusiastic. The Generation Wholesale Division does not use competences but instead focuses on the person and self-awareness. Irrespective of these differences in the focus of the development workshop, a common outcome is that the initiative for actioning development needs is placed firmly with the individual. The resultant PDP is not signed off and remains personal to the individual, unless they choose to share it with their manager or mentor (although this is encouraged). Individuals at this level do not form part of the succession planning process and therefore the completed PDPs are not used in this way.

We were able to analyse some completed PDPs that had originated via self-development workshops. The most frequently expressed development needs were in personal skills areas, such as assertiveness or interpersonal skills. At 65 per cent of all development needs this was by far the most common category. Knowledge acquisition; improved business awareness, was the next most frequently cited development need at 21 per cent with experience and job related technical skills at five per cent and nine per cent respectively. The resultant proposed development activities were most frequently job based, followed by non-academic courses and self study/open learning.

Implementation

The scheme was launched using a range of communication processes: workshops, the company newspaper, and a briefing session for managers. The creation of the Open Learning system has emphasised the importance of personal development within the company.

The development workshops were accompanied by training for assessors and the use of assessor manuals. For individuals nominated to attend, there was an informal cheese and wine party at the start to help 'break the ice'. There was also a workshop for individuals and their prospective mentors to create a mentor network. However, this had not worked particularly well to date.

Impact and evaluation

It is too early to attribute any significant change in employee behaviour to the introduction of PDPs. However, consultants working with the company on other projects, who knew Scottish Power three years ago when the company was formed, have commented on the significant change they now observe in managerial behaviour and performance, and in the performance and competence of other staff.

The scheme feeds into senior management succession planning where appropriate, with each division holding annual reviews of their human resources, using data that were not available in the past. Other ways of assessing its impact have proved difficult as the entire scheme at Scottish Power is very new and, therefore, is still at a developmental stage. It is intended that the scheme will be monitored and assessed in each Division and that a full company review will take place in 12 to 18 months.

Case Study 4: TSB Bank plc

Background

Personal development has a long and varied history at TSB. Its origins lie in the performance management system introduced in 1988 in which personal development plans played a very small part. In response to a worsening recession and an increasingly competitive financial services marketplace, TSB introduced a new corporate strategy which included a re-organisation and downsizing in 1990. To support this strategy required a shift in attitudes to learning away from the provision of training, towards independent, proactive, individual learning. Consequently, a new policy statement was issued emphasising individual 'responsibility for personal learning. At around the same time a Total Quality programme was initiated which also encouraged individual ownership of learning for continuous improvement.

In 1991 the profile of personal development within the performance management system was raised, and in 1992 the personal development section was separated out from the appraisal documentation. Over the past two years TSB has merged banking and insurance operations, streamlined support and operations processes, and made major moves forward in the development of different customer service and product delivery channels. Not surprisingly, this has created a major challenge for the introduction of the espoused learning culture, and different parts of the business have progressed at different rates.

Coverage, content and process

Personal development plans in TSB apply to senior clerical grades upwards. They are utilised by various parts of TSB Retail Bank, potentially 12,000 users, but not by other companies in the wider TSB group. At this stage in the evolution of the personal development plan concept, the spread of PDPs is not uniform throughout the Bank and some areas are only now ready for their introduction.

The scheme is optional. Line managers we spoke to said they pushed hard for its completion but generally acknowledged that not everyone would complete it. Some users expressed the view that the success of the scheme depended to a large degree on the enthusiasm and commitment of the line manager. They could play a key role in encouraging individuals and giving the message that PDPs were important. Some users believed that greater clarity on who owns the PDP, and what it is meant to achieve, may help individual commitment.

The scheme is not monitored at the centre, although there are measures in place to track use. This was a deliberate decision as central monitoring did not sit comfortably with the ethos of personal ownership.

As described above, personal development plans are an outcome of the performance management process, but their production is also encouraged as part of a framework of management development programmes. Personal development is an integral part of these programmes. Line managers and local personnel teams are partners with the individual in terms of getting development plans actioned. The senior level Challenge Programme, concentrating on the skills needed for senior management, is also supported by a formal mentoring scheme.

Nominees for the development programmes must have an active PDP, as must internal recruits for the Management Trainee Scheme.

Implementation

The scheme was designed and launched in a step by step way by the Training and Development Department. Publicity for the initiative included leaflets to all staff, a letter from the Director, plus a question and answer sheet. Managers we spoke to commented that they would have liked a more formal launch.

As the initiative of personal development plans was so new, it was felt that individuals and line managers needed guidance to complete the process. Consequently, supporting documentation gave detailed guidance and was much more complex than before — so much so that many were daunted by the prospect of its completion. A far simpler version was therefore re-issued in 1993, in the belief that employees had now grasped the concept and were comfortable with its application. It seemed however, that this new, simpler document had not penetrated to all areas, as not every manager we spoke to had seen it. Some that had, believed it had become too simple and would have liked more guidance as part of the form, a view echoed in our discussions with individuals who said they would have liked more help.

On-going support is provided by local personnel specialists. Central HR learned that gaining their commitment was essential for the effective roll-out of the scheme. The centre maintains an integrated approach by involving local personnel staff in activities to promote personal development.

Impact and evaluation

TSB's training policy states that each individual should be enabled to develop his/her potential. TSB have set a target that within two years everyone should be operating an effective PDP.

Individuals commented that they believed that managers had an important role to play in maintaining the use of PDPs. By discussing the PDP at quarterly review meetings they gave the message that the scheme was important. Some individuals commented that their managers did not show much interest in their PDP and consequently they themselves lost enthusiasm. Those individuals who had completed a PDP via the Challenge Development Programme spoke of the benefit of peer support and the time given on the programme to work through development needs. Overall, the attitudes of users we spoke to varied. Some spoke of the opportunity to knock down barriers to development or career moves, of forging closer and more supportive relationships with managers, of increasing confidence and employability. Others were more cynical and believed there was much confusion over who and what the PDP was for, that there was much rhetoric but little real support, and that some managers' attitudes meant that certain things could not be shared with them, hence the PDP only containing what was acceptable in that public domain. This difference in view, from the very positive to the negative, may be a reflection of the difference in enthusiasm of line managers.

Managers felt that there had indeed been a shift in culture, that development now took place in the context of a wide range of resources and was more self driven than company driven. Individuals tended to be better focused and more forward thinking. There were signs, however, that the scheme needed a boost as completion was declining. Undoubtedly the initiative was launched at a very difficult time and alongside other high profile initiatives such as TQM. Some users that we spoke to contrasted the high profile given to TQM with the quieter introduction of PDPs, and believed a higher profile launch would have helped. In fact a decision was made to implement via steady growth and gradual reinforcement to avoid possible negative reactions to there being too many HR initiatives.

Case Study 5: BP Chemicals

Background

In 1989, the Chairman of BP set up a project team to examine ways in which the company needed to change. At that time BP was seen to be too bureaucratic and hierarchical. This team believed the way forward demanded new behaviour, summarised as:

O pen thinking
P ersonal impact
E mpowering
N etworking

These OPEN behaviours underpinned many subsequent initiatives. In 1990 various groups were set up to examine processes such as appraisal. The climate at this time was one of financial uncertainty and reduced opportunity for upward progression. In the circumstances self-development was seen as key — a fundamental culture change initiative of which managers were very uncertain. It did, however, have strong top level support.

Coverage, content and process

All non-unionised staff are covered by the PDP initiative: in BP Chemicals some 4,000 individuals. Internationally, in the USA take-up is 100 per cent. Worldwide it is approximately 50 to 60 per cent. The scheme is completely optional. The form itself is very simple and is given to employees as part of the appraisal pack. However the PDP process is separated from the appraisal process by six months. Central HR thought that this may not always be observed. As trust in the PDP scheme has grown, managers and employees may be able to integrate it closer in time to performance appraisal. The appraisal covers performance through the demonstration of OPEN behaviours which, expressed in terms of competences, encourage appraisees to think in this way.

The formulation of the personal development plan is supported by a software package called 'Connections', with the emphasis of around 70 per cent on the current job, 25 per cent on the future and five per cent person focused. The software leads the individual to consider various issues such as work/family balance, what the individual wants for the future and the skills, knowledge and experience needed, and how these can be acquired. They are encouraged to talk to people at home, peers and anyone else who may be helpful. Once again the software leads people through this. Most of the users we spoke to had used the software package and found it useful. They commented that its main value was when personal development was a new concept. Once experience was acquired the package was less

important. The package took some time to complete but many of the sections would not have to be repeated very frequently, if at all, as they gave insights into learning styles and the company. The case study discussion group of managers had experienced more mixed reactions to 'Connections' and many had found that use among their teams had been variable. One believed it was aimed at too low a level, others had received comments that it told individuals what they knew already, but others believed that several of their staff had found it useful.

At the site we visited, individuals are expected to have a development discussion with their line manager every six months, which can be initiated by either party. The individuals we spoke to would normally initiate this themselves. Managers agreed that individuals should take the initiative but would themselves initiate meetings if individuals failed to do so. Managers felt that development discussions were not applicable to every individual. Some had reached their desired career goal and did not want to progress.

Other than via the appraisal system, BP Chemicals also run both development and assessment centres which are structured around helping develop realistic PDPs.

Once completed, the hard copy of the plan is signed off as an agreed plan. The employee is responsible for progressing it but the company is a partner: the employee thinks creatively what to do, the manager helps them to deliver it. In fact, responsibilities are explicitly assigned in the PDP. It is then retained by the manager, the employee and HR. At BP Chemicals' Hull site, individuals can choose to present their completed PDP to staff development teams. These consist of the individual's line manager, their senior line manager and a manager from another section. The panel can provide a broader outlook and give an overview on how desired experiences can be achieved. They can also act as a reality check by encouraging individuals to look at realistic options for development. Each user would normally present their PDP yearly, but less frequently if this was more appropriate. Both individuals and managers believed that staff development teams played an important role in keeping the PDP initiative going. However, managers expressed concern that attendance at the meetings was now viewed as mandatory whereas they were trying to encourage individual choice.

As part of the selection process for job posting, PDPs accompany individuals' applications to demonstrate why they want the job.

Implementation

PDPs were an integral part of a number of other HR initiatives, united by their support for OPEN behaviours, that were conceived at company wide level and then taken forward by the businesses individually. Within BP Chemicals their introduction

was overseen by a line steering group and the detail worked up by a multi-disciplinary project team in HR. The launch itself was clearly a massive undertaking in this international setting. All employees were given a guide to employee development, a book was produced for managers, and all team leaders had to present to their teams. A booklet was produced which was sent around the world, and small groups at each location piloted the scheme. As a consequence of feedback from this piloting, the books and software were substantially amended. At the final product launch, use was made of internal newspapers and a video. This demonstrated how the initiative fitted in with appraisal and competences. It was felt at this time that existing managers needed some help in developing coaching skills to try and ensure quality conversations on development. Therefore all managers went through a coaching course, and booklets were produced to assist the coaching process. All materials were provided in a range of languages.

On-going support varies from location to location. In the USA there are support hotlines and advisors for both employees and managers, this is reflected in the uptake of 100 per cent. Elsewhere some support for individuals is available from HR. All new employees get a booklet on arrival, and the scheme is also covered in the induction programme. The coaching course continues to run.

Impact and evaluation

At implementation assumptions were made of a likely take-up of 25 per cent over the first two years, which has been well exceeded. At the site we visited, uptake was estimated at 100 per cent. A recent, company wide, attitude survey showed that 62 per cent of individuals felt they took responsibility for their own personal development, and 45 per cent thought managers encouraged the development of skills. This is a major change in attitudes compared to 1990. HR have seen instances of job moves and individuals widening their responsibilities within their current job. There has been an overall trend towards more project type work. Most dramatically the take-up of central courses has decreased by 70 per cent in one year as the organisation moves to more tailored training.

Individuals spoke of the PDP process providing a vehicle to hang development on, leading to varied development outcomes. Some had asked for, and been placed on, an MBA programme. Others had been given job related training or experience. There was general agreement that lateral job moves had become more difficult in the current climate. Individuals also commented on the process giving them a longer term view and increasing commitment to development generally, and to self development particularly. There was a strong view from users that PDPs worked but that the commitment from the line manager was essential.

Managers believed that the culture had moved to become more open and that this was healthy. Most believed that their relationship with their staff had changed as a result of PDPs. The development discussion had become more relaxed and the discussion process had helped managers get to know their staff better. PDPs eased the manager's role as individuals took more initiative and managers devolved more. They also spoke of more networking and greater realism about opportunities in the company as a result. Despite the greater time burden on managers, they commented that it was time well spent.

Case Study 6: Marks and Spencer

Background

At Marks and Spencer, PDPs are an integral part of a management development programme. This programme was originally conceived as a way of addressing various business issues that the company was grappling with at the time. Like others in this study, the effect of delayering and reducing numbers of people led the organisation to look for individuals who could self-start and be able to take responsibility for their own development. The company wanted to move away from the culture of paternalism and therefore the development scheme with its emphasis on self-directed learning was an important lever for change.

Coverage, content and process

The PDP scheme at Marks and Spencer covers executives, senior and middle managers and supervisors via the management development programmes. Prior to the executive and senior programme there is a one day seminar where potential participants learn about the course. They complete psychometric profiling and are given advance work to do assembling a profile of themselves from the viewpoint of peers, subordinates and managers. The latter two programmes are not preceded by psychometric profiling and are more work focused. The comments of individual users and line managers refer to the senior manager scheme.

To date, most of the executives have been through the scheme and around 60 to 65 per cent of the 1,500 senior managers and approximately 85 per cent of middle managers and supervisors.

The development plans are an integral part of the management development programme, which is very much a whole person development event, designed to challenge individuals' perception of themselves, to give them greater self-insight and more awareness of how others see them. A key outcome of each development event is to create groups that trust and support each other in this process. These groups consist of those that attended a particular management development programme and can be both the entire cohort and a much smaller set that form a more nuclear support group both on and off the programme. They are encouraged to continue to meet and it is in this context that the PDP is updated and progress discussed. Individuals described how some formally update their PDP via these groups. Others tend to keep it in their heads and update it via verbal conversations. Most individuals share their PDP with their line manager. Also integral to the scheme is the role of mentor/sponsor who will support both individuals and groups.

Mentors are selected from volunteers who have already been through a management development programme.

The development programmes themselves are self-nominating, although those that do not nominate themselves may well be encouraged to do so: attendance is seen as a very positive thing.

The original form used was a glossy leaflet but individuals preferred a less perfect version. The form was issued in two variations. One simply covered areas to be worked on under general headings; the other looked at these areas for development action in a more focused way, by dividing the form into the ten core skill areas. Individuals could choose for themselves which form they used. In practice, nearly all individuals chose to use the less structured version of the form.

Actions cover behaviours, skills, attitudes, and networking. The actions themselves vary: it can be sharing the action plans with peers or subordinates, or talking to others to get feedback. Individuals are encouraged to tackle small, achievable objectives rather than be too ambitious initially and possibly fail.

PDPs can also be created via an appraisal system which has variable impact in different parts of the business, with take-up generally greater in the stores. There was a view that PDPs created via the management development programme had much more impact than those arising from appraisal, and we therefore concentrate on the former in this case study.

Implementation

The management development programme was the initiative of the Management Development Manager and developed in conjunction with a consultancy who have been closely involved with the scheme ever since. The introduction itself was fairly low key and initially delegates for the course were the subordinates of senior managers who were known to be keen and supportive of management development. This created an informal network until the scheme was formally launched. At that stage in the programme's development, line managers had to go on a two day briefing before their subordinates attended the course. This was abandoned later as being too unwieldy and increasingly redundant, as more and more managers themselves attended the course and therefore did not need to be briefed. Individuals spoke of a certain mystique about the course prior to their experiencing it. This they felt was due to the difficulty of describing to others what was for most a profound personal experience.

Since implementation, there has been an integration of core skills, which individuals we spoke to felt gave greater clarity to the process of development outcomes. Psychometric profiling used to happen on the course and now precedes it as individuals

are then better prepared. It also takes place on a one to one basis rather than in a group forum.

Impact and evaluation

There has not been any formal evaluation of the development programme and the role of PDPs within it. There is, however, some evidence of the scheme's success, for example the drop out rate prior to attendance on the course has fallen from ten per cent to around two per cent. Target groups continue to come on the course and give time, despite increasing work pressures. There have also been some key commercial benefits arising from the development programmes. For example: individuals have undertaken development projects on issues such as customer service; cross-group networking has produced some tangible benefits including the introduction of new lines; different parts of the business have developed a greater understanding of each other; and individuals have used their support network to help them examine their units' objectives.

Managers and individuals we spoke to had clearly been very impressed with the development programme. Managers felt the programme had had a huge impact; individuals were more self-motivated and could see the rewards, one had made a lateral career change as a direct result of the management development programme, others had undertaken very different tasks. The company culture had changed significantly, there was more honesty and openness and the executive development programme was perceived to have had a critical effect; executives now talked openly about their own development needs which had not happened previously. Individuals also believed the company culture had changed significantly from paternalism to partnership. The permission to seek feedback was part of the management development programme culture. One manager described the culture at Marks & Spencer as previously being one of 'Don't bring me the questions, bring me the answers', whereas now there were open and frank discussions, and as a consequence the organisation was significantly better at bringing about change.

Individuals also believed they and others were more honest as a result and more willing to seek and accept feedback. Some mentioned the empowerment of the course with its emphasis on individual impact, others had found the effects of the course to be almost entirely personal.

Other than these cultural changes, managers spoke of a change in development outcomes away from a set of courses towards other forms of learning and development.

Case Study 7: The Wellcome Foundation

Background

Wellcome have been running a Management Development Programme for selected middle and senior managers worldwide since July 1992. This includes a 1½ day session on Personal Career Planning and 360 degree feedback is used as a diagnostic tool in the process. Prior to this current programme through which PDPs are created, career development was a process carried out by the line on behalf of individuals without their direct knowledge. The company wanted to improve its succession planning in a way that gave better information to managers involved in the process. To do this, individuals had to take part. This not only improved the information available, but was also designed to address the realisation that many individuals had not managed their careers very effectively. A further objective was to broaden more senior managers and give them experience of working in other functions and countries. Another influence, which came later, was the drive for personal responsibility, to move away from a culture of paternalism and also to prepare people better for a future where lifelong employment with Wellcome could not be guaranteed.

Coverage, content and process

One of the main ways in which PDPs are created is via the Management Development Programme which is designed for high fliers at middle to senior management level. The programme is divided into two modules, the first a two week course in London followed after four months by a one week course in the USA, which starts with one day devoted to career planning. The resulting career plan is logged with HR. Prior to attendance on this programme, participants have to complete Schein's career anchors questionnaire, a 360 degree review and a self-rating questionnaire. Individuals are encouraged to use the feedback of the development programme to develop objectives and to utilise these in team building with the other attendees.

Other ways of creating career profiles and plans are via the appraisal scheme (in the UK and USA), by being considered for a job or, indeed, as a stand alone document. The opportunity to develop a career plan is open to anyone. Career plans are optional, but as they feed into the succession planning process which is not optional, their completion is strongly encouraged.

The PDPs themselves tend to concentrate on job moves as a development process, but will also contain projects and task forces, secondments/transfers, training courses and formal education. Those arising from the development programme tend to use more competence based language, and more assignments as a development tool. Perhaps because of the links to more formal succession planning, the more personal development

needs tend to be held back. Individuals themselves agreed that this tends to be the case especially in the current climate of driving down costs and overheads and large scale reorganisation. In the completed PDPs that we were able to analyse, these impressions were upheld. The most frequently occurring development needs were categorised in terms of gaining experience, usually of a different function or country, or of acquiring knowledge. Development outcomes were nearly always expressed in terms of job moves or secondments.

The manager's role within PDPs is to give feedback on the individual's own assessments and aspirations, to provide opportunities for development, to pursue with the individual other avenues and to help make some of the development actions happen. On the development programme individuals are also encouraged to log their plans with their manager's manager, as they may have a wider view of the career opportunities available.

Implementation

The current management development programme was readily accepted and rolled out top down, with full support from the Chief Executive. It formed the first international management development programme for 15 years. The introduction was overseen by a formal steering group of senior line and HR managers and utilised the results of a survey designed to find individual views on the key issues facing the business. Two levels were created: the management development programme already mentioned, and a senior management programme comprising two one week modules separated by four weeks. This was marketed as a forum for strategic debate which made it more acceptable to its target audience than a training course would have been. Both programmes were delivered in conjunction with a business school. The launch of the programme was via face to face briefings, a brochure, and a video for key people.

On-going support for career planning discussions is offered to line managers by HR and individuals can also come and talk directly to central HR for career counselling. In both the UK and USA performance appraisal skills training has been offered.

Impact and evaluation

Objectives were not initially set for the Management Development programme with the initial approach being low key, thus allowing the programme to build on its own success rather than undertake a very public launch. There has been one major review with external consultants to understand the relevance of the work and its contribution to the company's objectives, which took place approximately one year after the programme's launch. This review surveyed all those who had been through the MDP, their

peers and subordinates. The results were very positive and individual career planning was especially appreciated. Individuals and colleagues were seeing things done differently, individuals felt that there was a broadening of perspective and understanding of the business.

Individuals we spoke to were mixed in their reaction to creating a PDP. Some were hazy in their recollection of this part of the programme. Others were more enthusiastic and referred to the PDP as being their opportunity to log what they wanted and needed to do. None of the individuals we spoke to had updated the development plan they had created on the programme, and they were also unclear about how it was used by HR. They felt that development had been caught up in a lengthy exercise — Activity Value Analysis (AVA) — which required detailed analysis of the way individuals spent their time. AVA is a major organisation wide review of activities and costs and has clearly been an uncomfortable process. The outcome of this exercise was a short term focus on reducing costs, which meant that some had experienced development needs not being fulfilled. Moves had become more difficult and dependent on enlightened managers who had been less affected by the budget cuts following AVA. Managers we spoke to were hopeful that individual development needs would be addressed once more when Wellcome returned to a more certain environment.

In the course of the interviews conducted for this research, HR believed that there were improved communications between different functions and also within functions, with more team working and the ground rules being laid for a new culture. Lateral job moves had been tangibly greater, which included the whole of the company, not just the UK. There were more short term assignments and more cross functional moves. Individuals we spoke to were aware of a culture change in the company but less sure how this impacted on their behaviour. A key understanding was that working for Wellcome could no longer be considered a job for life. However, many were continuing to try to secure a future in the company by broadening experience through working in other functions and gaining some international experience. Individuals also commented that they believed that the development programme and PDPs had made them more employable in that the opportunity for reflection had enabled them to clarify the experience they had and the development opportunities they needed.

Individuals commented that the most recent senior appointments had come from people who had been through the MDP, which was felt by some to be as a result of the participants on the programme becoming more aware of their development needs and doing something about them. Alternatively, some believed that the development programme was in fact assessment orientated and that individuals were being identified with promotion potential.

Case Study 8: Abbey National

Background

Abbey National introduced Personal Development Diaries early in 1993 following a pilot scheme in 1992. The diaries were introduced as part of a wider review of performance management within the company and were intended to encourage individuals to take more responsibility for their own appraisals and personal development.

Coverage, content and process

Personal Development Diaries are available to all Abbey National staff and their use is completely optional, although other aspects of performance management, *eg* year-end and interim appraisals, are compulsory. This emphasis on personal responsibility — particularly in relation to development — is an extension of the approach taken with career management; any individual can have a 'Career Management Profile' (based on generic competences), but nobody has to have one. To date, over six thousand diaries have been requested (over one-third of the total workforce).

A diary can be requested at any time, but requests often coincide with induction, participation in training or education programmes, or are generated by the appraisal process. Diaries are also distributed to graduate trainees and participants in Career Development Workshops. The diaries are designed to be employee-driven, although feedback from users emphasises that they work more successfully when the manager takes an interest or initiates discussions on the contents.

The diary contents cover career history, personal motivations, job context, performance records, and the planning and monitoring of learning/development. Individual users are encouraged to adapt the diary to suit their own needs, adding or removing elements as they see fit. Whilst most of the diary contents remain with the individuals, there is also the facility for them to submit their Career Management Profiles to their personnel office. The profiles were expressed in terms of competences, and this enables individuals to receive reports comparing their own personal competency profile with that demanded by their current job, the next job up or the average profiles of their peer group, to help them plan their personal development.

Implementation

The diaries were designed by a working party of managers from different levels across the organisation. This was part of the wider project to review performance management and make a number

of recommendations on how the process could be improved. Members of the project group also took on responsibility for presenting the findings and recommendations from the project.

Abbey National offer all staff a range of learning resources, including interactive computer tutorials, self-assessment tools, and a wide range of videos and books. Use of the resources helps individuals and managers to determine development needs and identify solutions that fit with differing local demands and work patterns (many staff work part-time).

Impact and evaluation

Enhancements were made to the original diary design following the pilot study, prior to its full launch in early 1993. Since then, only the number distributed has been rigorously monitored. But a full evaluation study is currently under way, with findings and recommendations due by late Summer 1994. During June, a questionnaire was circulated to ten per cent of diary users, so that the content and usage could be evaluated and improvements made as necessary. The questionnaire has been designed to measure the effectiveness of the diary in helping individuals to manage their own jobs, careers and development. Managers are also being asked if the diary has helped in the management of others.

Abbey National appear confident that the diaries can be considered instrumental and of benefit to those using them, although their worth seems to be more appreciated by those in the junior/middle management ranks. However, all staff in the company are now in a position where the mechanisms exist for them to drive a dialogue concerning their own development which should, in turn, lead to more focused skills development and improved performance management.

2.2 Summary of telephone interviewed case studies

This section summarises the main issues which emerged from the telephone interviews conducted as part of this study in addition to the detailed case studies above. One of the telephone interviews has already been described in more detail and appears as a separate case study above, although it is also included in the summary below.

Seven telephone interviews were selected from those organisations which were interested in participating in this study but had not been using PDPs for very long or which were from a sector that was already represented. Of those selected, three were from the energy sector, one from communications, two from public services and one from financial services. The initiative for PDPs was found to have been largely driven by the Personnel/HR function with board approval. Two participants were also committed to the IiP initiative and one had drawn upon the MCI competences model at the design stage of their scheme.

Performance management systems were currently being introduced by three participants and all seven were found to be using or introducing a competence based approach. Everyone interviewed identified PDPs with meeting business objectives, goals, needs or plans. PDPs were found to be open ended, usually linking with other HR processes (*eg* appraisal) or frameworks (*eg* competences). Six of the seven participants interviewed were currently involved with either implementing or revising their existing PDP framework. Although the new or revised schemes were generally available for all staff groups, interest shown was often found to be greater for those employees in, or approaching, managerial positions. None of the organisations who participated in the telephone interviews were formally monitoring their schemes beyond initial take up figures.

All participants viewed PDPs as a flexible self-driven tool, usually supported by the job holder's line manager, although the relationship between the job holder and the line manager varied. PDPs were intended to be a vehicle for employees' development, generally within their job by realising individuals' potential and maximising opportunities. Cross-functional job moves were frequently given as an example of a typical learning action that might occur as a result of producing a PDP. All those organisations interviewed emphasised that PDPs were not to be viewed as a mechanism for promotion.

Other resulting actions cited included: on and off the job training, technical skills training (usually via short courses), job rotation, coaching programmes, secondments, and business awareness training. One organisation encouraged job holders to

use PDPs for planning career breaks. Two were using a computer based system for job profiling. These systems could also be used to determine employees' preferred learning styles.

Participants frequently reported using workshops and information packs at the implementation stage of their schemes, together with ongoing support such as help lines and computer based information on learning opportunities.

Some participants interviewed were concerned about the issues of personal development planning in organisations that are currently downsizing. However, others felt that PDPs could be instrumental in providing job holders with valuable opportunities and experiences that they might previously have been denied. Therefore downsizing was not generally viewed as a barrier to introducing PDP schemes. Some participants were also apprehensive about maintaining employees' enthusiasm for PDPs and managing their expectations over time. Organisations interviewed, stressed the need to inform, involve, support and gain commitment from all staff (particularly line managers) from the outset, in order to dispel any worries or confusion.

2.3 Summary

This chapter has presented the detailed findings from eight named case study organisations (seven of which were visited and one which participated by telephone) and from an additional six organisations which contributed through telephone interviews. In this latter group, the PDP schemes were at a relatively early stage of development. The case studies raise a range of more general issues which are explored in the rest of the report.

3. Main Findings

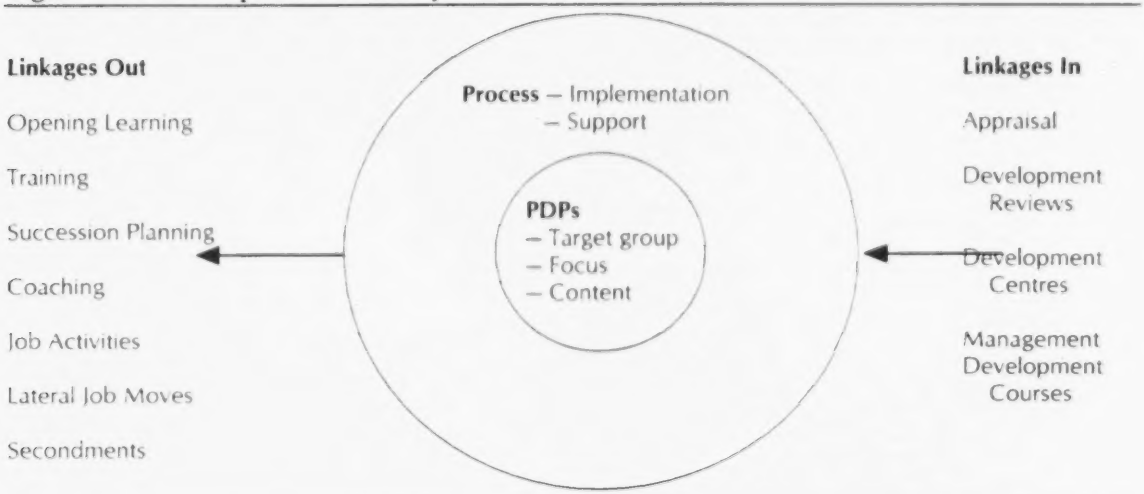
There are certain themes that have emerged from this study of personal development plans. The main findings are structured around these themes:

- the content and character of PDPs themselves: their focus, who they are completed by, the framework by which skills and learning needs are expressed, what they cover and how the paperwork (often a form) is presented.
- process issues surrounding the PDP initiatives: how they are implemented and supported, who has a role to play in them.
- the HR processes or information which flows into and out of the plans: what processes they flow from and what processes they contribute to.
- finally we present an overview of the impact of PDPs on the organisation.

The relationships between these themes are illustrated in Figure 3.1.

These findings are based on the case study material already presented in some detail in Section 2, and an analysis of completed PDPs for three organisations. A summary table of findings is shown in Appendix B. This table shows key

Figure 3.1 PDPs as part of the HR system



Source: IES

information for all case study companies: their coverage, focus, details of implementation, how the PDP is originated, the other HR processes that it feeds into, how PDPs have been evaluated and the learning points organisations have perceived they have acquired.

3.1 Content and characteristics of the PDP

3.1.1 Frameworks for skills and learning needs

Most organisations provide a framework to help individuals think about personal development. In most of our case studies competences or skills lists were used to help individuals articulate development needs. In addition, other inputs were also used to develop a common understanding to assist personal development in four of our case studies. In three of these organisations individuals were asked to undertake a *360 degree review*, and in all three this took place in the context of a management development programme. Of these three: one was using the *OPQ* to complete this review; one was also asking individuals to complete a *career anchor questionnaire* and a *learning styles questionnaire*; and the third was utilising a battery of psychometric tests alongside the 360 degree review. The fourth organisation supplied an interactive computer programme that helped individuals develop a common understanding by various exercises including a learning styles questionnaire.

Three of our case studies were also involved in a Total Quality Programme. In these cases the PDP initiative complemented the emphasis on continuous personal improvement.

3.1.2 Target group

A further influence on the character of PDPs is the target group itself. The majority (eight of our case studies) intended PDPs to be used for all staff, but a number of these were still in the process of introduction. Four had schemes for managers only, and two had schemes that were directed at managerial/clerical staff but excluded at present another operational section of the workforce. It would seem that those that have had schemes the longest have mostly begun with managerial staff, whereas those currently introducing PDPs have adopted a more broad brush approach.

3.1.3 Focus

From our literature search we expected there to be a difference in the focus of PDP with some being focused mainly on development needed in the current job, some primarily career focused and others embracing the development needs and interests of the whole person.

Table 3.1 Focus of PDPs in Case Study Organisations

	Visit Case Studies						
Case Study	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Focus	Whole person	Job Career Whole Person	Career	Job Career	Whole Person	Job Career	Job Career Whole person

	Telephone Case Studies						
Case Study	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**
Focus	Left to individual	Job Career	Unclear as yet	Job	Job Career	Whole person Job	Whole person Career Job

Note: where more than one focus is given, they are shown in order of weight

Source: IES, 1994

In the case study organisations (Table 3.1), it would seem that personal development plans were most commonly job or career focused or some mix of each. Of our case studies, five companies focused on current and future jobs about equally, and a sixth concentrated on the current job, but with more limited attention on the future. Four companies focused mainly on either the current job and/or the future but with some attention to the whole person. Less frequently the primary emphasis was on the whole person. In such cases, development is more likely to address assertiveness or personal impact than to deal with gaps in job related skills. Two of our case study companies described their schemes as being predominately whole person orientated.

Not all the case study companies were able to provide completed forms, either because the scheme had not been in operation very long or because completed PDPs were not returned to a central source, or were confidential to the individual. This was interesting in itself, as it showed differences between those organisations which expected to know who had a PDP, and even keep a copy, and those who did not expect to keep any form of control over the process in this way. Three organisations were able to provide some anonymous PDPs.

These completed plans showed quite marked differences in the development needs recorded by individuals. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 3.2. The organisation identified as case study number 2 produces PDPs by appraisal and development centre. The 38 PDPs we looked at were the outcome of the development centres and show considerably greater emphasis on the development of personal skills than the other two organisations. Interestingly, case study number 3, (49 completed PDPs were looked at), utilises completed PDPs for succession planning. Here the emphasis is on seeking

Table 3.2 Analysis of development needs from completed PDPs

Development Needs	Case study		
	2	3	7
Experience	5%	37%	0%
Knowledge	21%	34%	29%
Technical skills	9%	10%	42%
Personal skills	65%	19%	29%

Note: Completed PDPs=93 Development needs recorded = 224

Source: IES

opportunities for experience of different jobs or countries, and enhancing work related knowledge, *eg* financial accounting and business awareness. Case study number 7 produces PDPs via an appraisal scheme where there is considerable focus on personal effectiveness.

Because of these profound differences it is important for employers to be clear on the focus of their PDPs, and to ensure that this is in line with their objectives for the scheme. Employees also need to be clear what kinds of needs the PDP is designed to address.

3.1.4 Development actions

For seven of our case study companies, the types of development actions recorded in PDPs could not yet be analysed as their schemes were so new. For the other seven companies who had been using PDPs for some time, individuals we spoke to reported a wide variety of development actions recorded in their plans. As might be expected, training courses featured highly but so did more unusual forms of development such as job moves; secondments; project work; task forces; work shadowing; coaching from managers or mentors; distance learning; and personal development opportunities. Many of these companies were hoping to move away from training as their main development approach and build a more varied development toolkit.

Further analysis of completed PDPs that we had available is shown in Table 3.3. This shows the types of development activities recorded by the participating employees. Case study number 3 utilises PDPs predominately for career plans and for succession planning and this is reflected in the high numbers of job moves being suggested as development actions.

From these forms and from our discussions with individuals some conclusions could be drawn. The kind of development outcome people pursue depends strongly on the organisation. For example, in some organisations the emphasis is still on

Table 3.3 Analysis of development actions from completed PDP forms

	Case Studies		
Development Actions	**2**	**3**	**7**
Job based activities	35%	31%	23%
Self study/open learning	41%	21%	3%
Course	6%	21%	8%
Project		2%	
Coaching	6%	6%	
Networking	6%	5%	1%
Secondment	6%	3%	5%
Job Move			60%
Other		11%	

Number of PDPs=93. Number of actions = 270

Source: IES

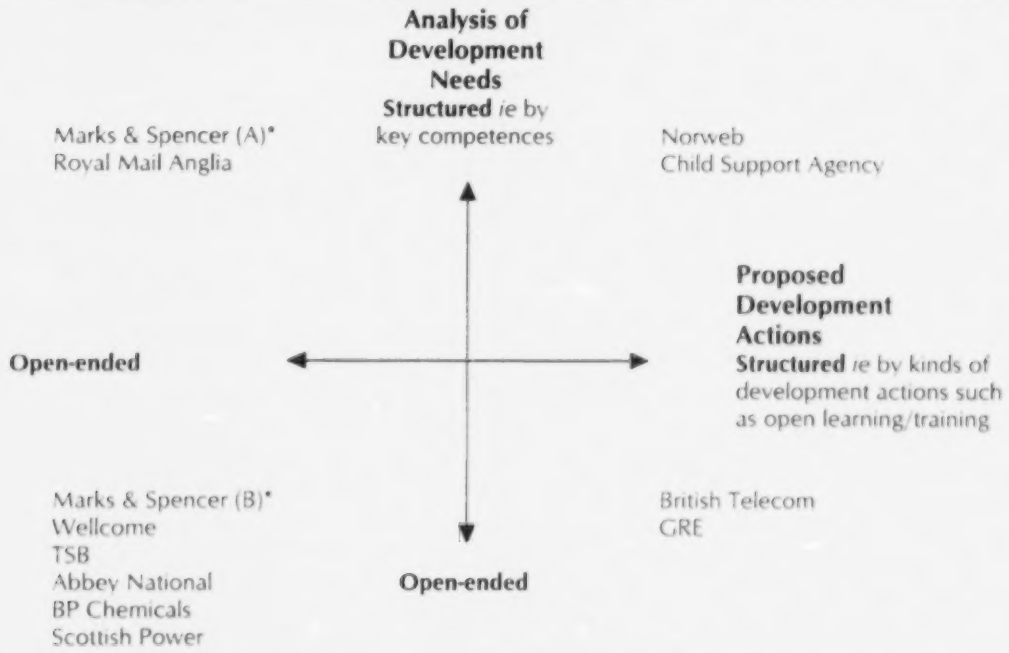
training courses, in others there has been a switch to self study and open learning, and in others the emphasis is on secondment opportunities, project experience or task forces. It appeared to be the case both from the discussion groups with users and from the analysis of completed forms that PDPs were a vehicle for expressing more varied development opportunities. Several users mentioned to us that they were looking more at on-the-job learning opportunities through coaching and mentoring. In those organisations that were encouraging whole person development, individuals were also using varied forms of direct feedback from peers, subordinates, managers and customers.

3.1.5 The PDP itself

We looked at blank forms from most of our case study organisations to examine the characteristics of the forms themselves. On analysis of the blank forms, there were clear differences in how structured the form itself was, both in the input side in defining areas of skill deficit, and in the output side in defining development actions planned. These differences along the input/output dimensions are illustrated in Figure 3.2.

As can be seen, a number of organisations define development needs in terms of competence or skill frameworks, thereby encouraging users to consider development needs in each of the key skill or competence areas. Others leave the definition of development needs to the individual. Similarly, on the output side some organisations had separate sections covering different sorts of development action, *ie* training, on-the-job development, counselling, secondment, distance learning *etc*. Others left individuals free to consider whatever development actions they wished. Example forms demonstrating the different approaches

Figure 3.2 Degree of structure in needs and planned actions



*Note: * Marks and Spencer offered their employees a choice of two alternative PDP forms, one more structured than the other.*

Source: IES

along the input/output dimensions are shown in Figures 3.3 and 3.4.

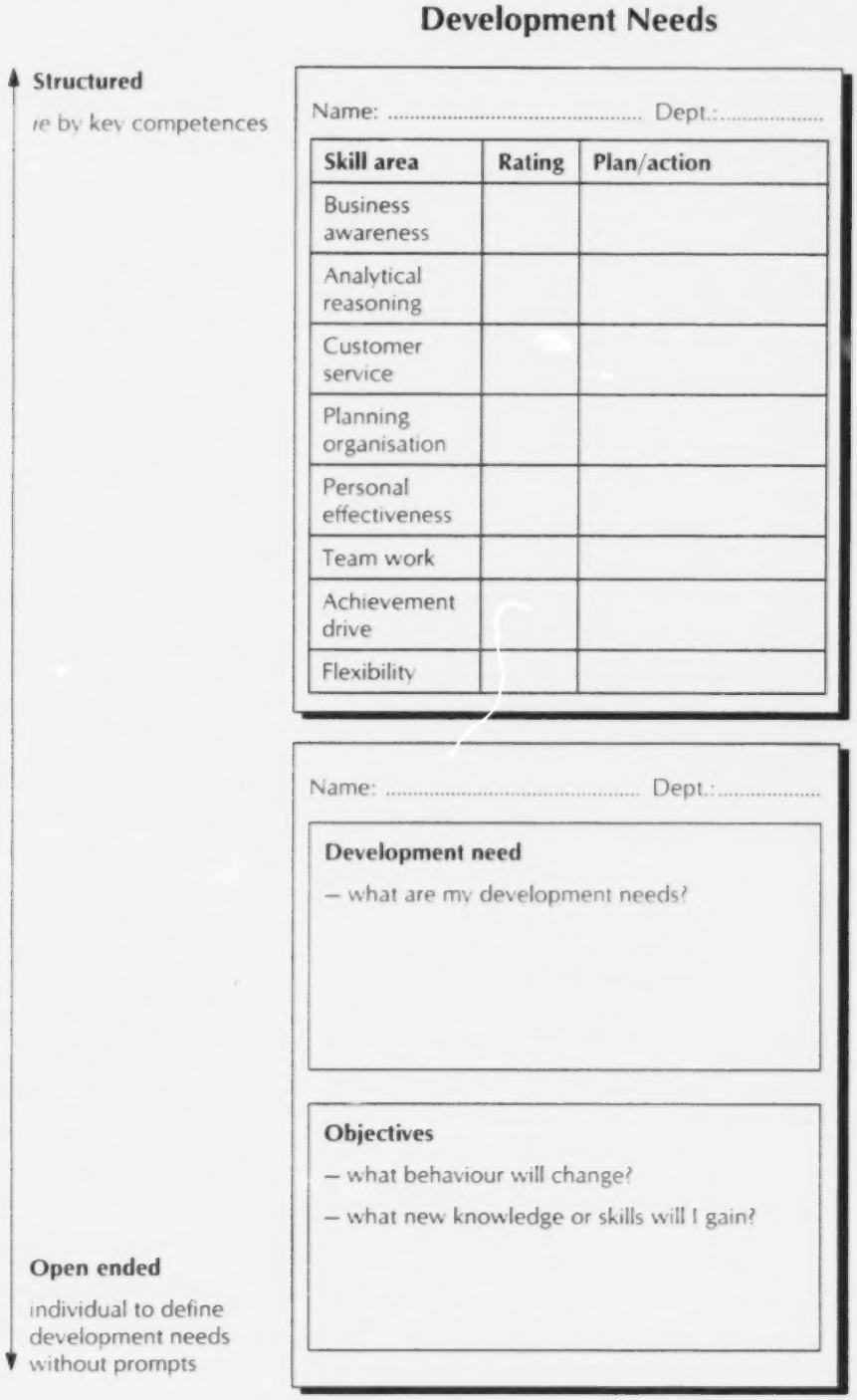
3.2 Process issues

3.2.1 Implementation

In most companies the HR unit or personnel function had played a major part in the implementation of PDPs; in twelve organisations they were the initiator and champion and in the remainder the Chief Executive had taken a personal interest in developing the PDP concept. In seven out of our fourteen cases the idea was developed involving a working party of one kind or another. Consultants were used to support the in-house HR team in seven cases.

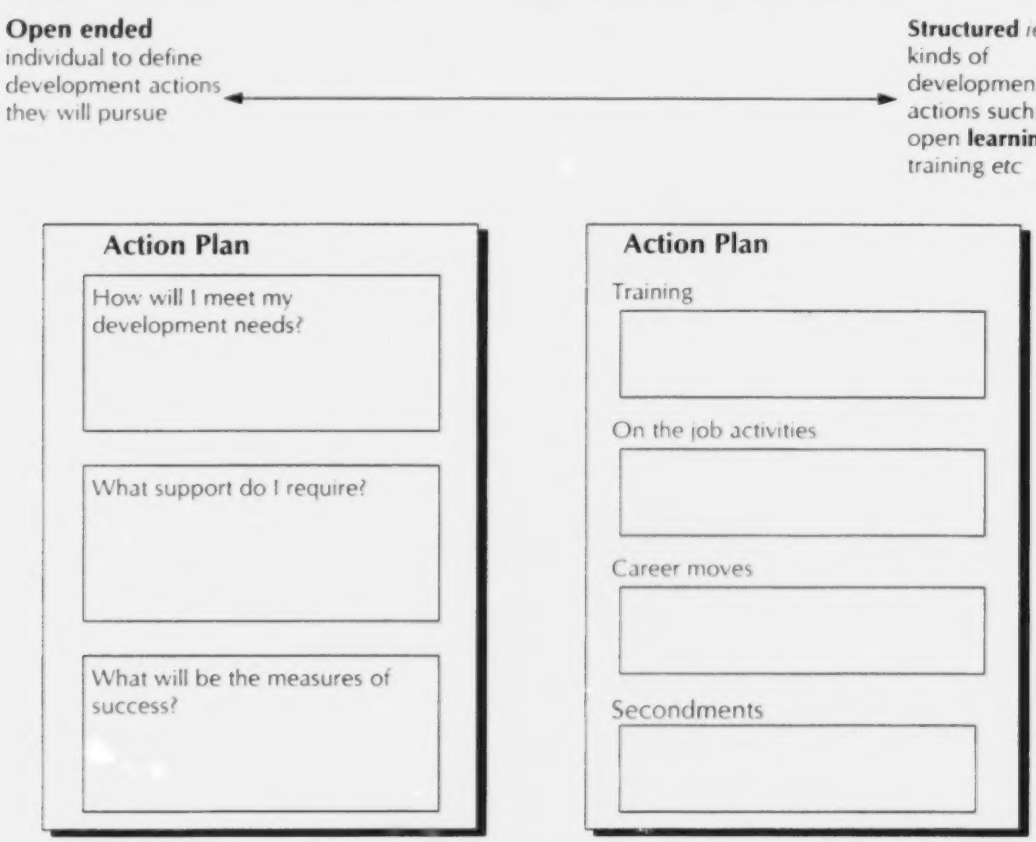
The detailed process of implementation varied, but most companies employed a range of initiatives to explain and publicise the scheme including company newspapers, briefing notes, booklets, videos, presentations and workshops. Formal piloting only took place in a minority of cases but most organisations who had used PDPs for some time had amended their initial scheme in the light of experience.

Figure 3.3 Structured and open ended approaches to development needs



Source: IES, 1994

Figure 3.4 Structured and open ended approaches to development actions


Open ended
individual to define development actions they will pursue
Structured ie by kinds of development actions such as open learning, training etc
Action Plan
How will I meet my development needs?
What support do I require?
What will be the measures of success?
Action Plan
Training
On the job activities
Career moves
Secondments

Source: IES

For some organisations the initial introduction was deliberately low key, either because senior managers would need convincing first of the value of investing in development initiatives, or because HR wanted to prove or pilot the initiative before a company wide launch. In these organisations PDPs were gradually introduced so that their value could be demonstrated and ambassadors for the scheme developed. Once this support had been gained then a more formal launch would frequently take place.

3.2.2 Support

The need for advice and support to those participating in PDPs and their managers was clearly a major issue for the case study organisations. The most popular means of providing support for employees and managers was via training or workshops (nine case studies), sometimes delivered by the HR department and sometimes delivered by cascade through line managers. This was reinforced in five organisations by written information in the form of manuals or guidelines. On-going support was normally

provided by the HR unit or local personnel specialists as appropriate. Two organisations provided telephone hotlines for managers and users of PDPs. In some programmes, support was an integral part of the programme itself; the programme was cascaded so that those offering support to others had been through the experience themselves. In one company, a management development programme deliberately created a support network from those attending each course, which functioned as an action learning set for the PDPs. This group would meet regularly to review development plans among other issues related to personal effectiveness.

3.2.3 Roles and responsibilities

In all cases the introduction of PDPs was seen as a way of shifting the responsibility for personal development towards the individual so that they had the primary responsibility for actioning the plans. Line managers played an essential support role in most organisations (twelve case studies) and would help get plans actioned through authorising training needs, arranging project work and secondments, and helping individuals think through their plans. In one case study this role may be undertaken, not by the immediate line manager, but by the next level up.

Several organisations felt that line managers did not all possess the necessary coaching and influencing skills for this role. Some had attempted to address this by providing training and support. Others had introduced a mentoring programme to supplement the role of line managers or, if individuals wished, to provide their main support. Of the five organisations that were using mentors, three used them for specific groups of staff, such as graduate entrants and participants on development programmes.

3.3 Linkages in

An important aspect of a PDP scheme is the process by which the PDP is created. These inward linkages affect the context in which the PDP is considered. We might expect that PDPs flowing from appraisal would reflect the emphasis of the appraisal and be more current job or career orientated, whereas whole person development plans would be expected to be the result of a more challenging and wide ranging development event such as a development workshop or a management development programme. As is shown below, these expectations were, in the main, upheld by the case study information.

On analysis (Tables 3.4 and 3.5), there were three organisations which utilised a management development event to create the PDP (case studies 1, 3 and 5); in two cases these turned out to be strongly whole person focused. In the third case the

Table 3.4 Linkages in to PDPs and the relationship with focus

	Case Studies						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Linkages In	Mgt Dev Course	Appraisal Dev wkshp	Mgt Dev Course	Appraisal Dev wkshp	Appraisal Dev wkshp	Appraisal	Appraisal Mgt Dev Course
Focus*	Whole Person	Job Career Whole Person	Career	Job Career	Whole Person	Job Career	Job Career Whole Person

*Note: * Where more than one focus is shown they are given in order of emphasis*

Source: IES

development event itself was much more career/job orientated and this, combined with other pressures on the PDP (it was designed as a career profile and used for succession planning and placement on secondment opportunities) made it mostly career focused. Seven organisations used appraisal as the main originating HR process (case studies 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13), and in five cases the resultant PDP was predominately current job and career based. One of these had also developed a computer programme that guided individual users through various self reflection exercises but which ended by focusing on career development. The seventh had not yet begun to really make use of PDPs and therefore could not assess their focus as yet.

Two organisations (case studies 4 and 8) were also using development centres as an alternative route to a PDP alongside appraisal or performance management schemes. In these cases the emphasis was, in one, on current job/future career, and in the other left to the individual. One case study (14), used development centres as a sole source of development plans which were in this case whole person, job and career focused.

Interestingly, one of our case studies (2), used a range of events to originate the PDP including appraisal and two different kinds of development workshops; one concentrating on job-related competences, the other on the whole person. Some of these

Table 3.5 Linkages in to PDPs and the relationship with focus

	Case Studies — Telephone interviews						
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Linkages in	Appraisal Dev wkshp	Appraisal	Appraisal	Appraisal	Appraisal	Appraisal	Dev wkshp
Focus*	Left to individual	Job Career	Unclear as yet	Job	Job Career	Job Whole Person	Whole person Career Job

*Note: * where more than one focus is shown they are given in order of emphasis.*

Source: IES

events were quite new and so it is difficult to make generalisations, but the HR people we spoke to commented that the events themselves and the outcomes were quite different in nature, with those from the latter workshops being more whole person focused.

3.4 Linkages out

Approximately half of the organisations we spoke to were not using personal development plans to contribute directly to any other HR process. In several cases this may well be due to the recent introduction of PDPs, which meant that links had not yet been formed. Seven companies reported using the resulting PDPs to influence other HR processes including job moves, placements on task forces, and job rotations. The degree of formality of these processes varied; in three companies it was an informal arrangement dependent on the individual and the line manager, in the others it was a more formal procedure. In two organisations PDPs were formally linked into succession plans, one well established and the other relatively recent. This creates a fundamental difference: whether the PDP is private to the individual with the emphasis on meeting their development needs, or whether it becomes a public document designed to also meet some organisational needs. The effect that this has is discussed further in the next chapter.

3.5 Impact and evaluation

None of the companies we spoke to had built evaluation criteria into the scheme to start with, although several had set objectives for the scheme. These tended to be fairly broad, along the lines of shifting responsibility for learning and development on, to the individual or developing a learning culture. For many it was too early to tell how the scheme was faring and some had deliberately adopted a hands off approach, which made evaluation more difficult. Five of our case studies had undertaken some kind of evaluation, although the means by which this was conducted varied enormously. Two companies had conducted an attitude survey, which in one showed that 62 per cent of individuals accepted responsibility for their own development and 45 per cent of individuals believed their manager encouraged development. This was in a company which sought a significant culture shift towards self development supported by the line. They were encouraged by this finding as these per centages had risen recently. In the second organisation the survey showed that satisfaction with training had increased.

Two case studies had monitored lateral job moves and had found an increase. In addition, one of these had commissioned an evaluation study which questioned the managers, peers and subordinates of those who had been involved in a management

development programme of which PDPs were an integral part. This reported that individuals performed more effectively since the programme. The other case study reported an increased sense of purpose, greater flexibility, better teamworking and improved performance against the competence criteria used in appraisal.

In one of our organisations, although no formal evaluation had been completed, individuals and managers we spoke to were universally in agreement that their programme had led to a clear and positive culture change. This was an organisation in which PDPs were embedded in a management development programme. In this case, other evidence of the success of the programme was reduction in the numbers of individuals who cancelled or postponed their attendance on the programme, despite increasing pressure on managers at work. The organisation also believed they had found tangible business advantages of improved networking and communication.

Where organisations had carried out some evaluation of the perceived value of PDPs the results were encouraging, although comparatively few of the case studies were conducting serious evaluations.

3.6 Summary

In this chapter we have looked across the case study organisations and identified some factors which seem important to the design and implementation of PDP schemes. They include:

- the use of frameworks (especially competences) and self-assessment instruments to help employees think about development
- the target group of staff
- the focus of the PDP, those linked with appraisal being more job or career focused than the more holistic emphasis in development centres or workshops
- the wide variety of development actions contained in PDPs and how these are influenced by the design of the scheme
- the central role played by HR in implementation
- the influence of more formal use of PDPs (in succession planning or job filling) on what people put in their plans
- some evidence of the impact of PDPs on culture and development activities.

These findings inform the more general issues discussed and summarised in the concluding chapter.

4. Issues for Practitioners

The previous two chapters have presented detailed case study information on the implementation of PDPs and shown how approaches varied between the case study organisations. In this final chapter we attempt to draw out some broader lessons from the research, which we hope will be of relevance to those contemplating the introduction of PDPs.

The emerging themes include factors which seem to enhance or reduce the effectiveness of PDPs. These range a good deal wider than the format of PDP forms. Some of the most important issues concern how PDPs link with other HR processes. It is a particular feature of employee development processes that they often have complex links with each other. Previous IES research on both employer-led processes such as succession planning (Hirsh, 1990) and self-development initiatives (Jackson, 1990; Jackson and Yeates, 1993) has already examined these linkages. This research certainly reinforces that message. PDP schemes need to be understood not just as 'forms' or even as processes for discussing development needs, but also in terms of their position within a web of other HR processes.

A PDP scheme should not be designed without an understanding of the other. processes already in place and how PDPs might link with them.

Many of the issues raised in this chapter arise with all career development interventions, and many of the ways of making PDPs more effective would also apply to other initiatives.

One of the problems in drawing out general messages from the case studies is that we are dealing with complex patterns of cause and effect, and no two organisations introduce PDPs in the same way or against the same background. We must also bear in mind the small scale nature of this research project. Some of the most interesting insights about the perceived difficulties with schemes became apparent in the discussion groups with line managers and users of PDPs. However, these were the subjective views of a relatively small number of people who might not have been representative of users as a whole. We therefore present these issues for practitioners knowing, as always, that more and larger-scale research is desirable, but also that practitioners need some advice now.

4.1 Philosophy

The notion of personal development planning arises out of theories about how individuals learn.

> Organisations going the self-development route, of which PDPs are so often a part, should realise just how big a culture change this is for most UK organisations.

4.1.1 Self-organised learning

The philosophical base for personal development plans lies in the concept of self-organised learning, with its emphasis on the individual being responsible for the identification of their own learning needs, and choosing the means by which they will be met. Self-organised learning is made up of two distinct components. Its definition means that it is learning organised by self, but it also potentially embraces learning that is not merely by self but also of self, *ie* it can have an emphasis on self-understanding, self-knowing. Within the literature a view was expressed that truly effective self-organised learning should contain both elements (Mossman and Stewart, 1988; Fritchie and Skinner, 1988).

Within the self-organised learning framework some organisations have interpreted learning widely, encompassing all aspects of the self or including learning activities that have little to do with an individual's current job or even future career. Others have focused heavily on job-related skills or knowledge, or have laid a heavy emphasis on the user's future career and required experience. If individuals are going to own the development process and invest the considerable time and energy which personal development demands, then the learning must have genuine relevance to their needs.

> The more tightly organisations define the arena for development the further they move from the philosophy of self-organised learning and the less likely are they to engage the enthusiasm and commitment of the learner.

In the course of this research several of the case study organisations spoke of business changes increasing the demand for individuals that were more independent and flexible thinkers. Within this context, if companies want to develop more flexible people, then development may well be more effective if it looks wider than the skills needed for the current or next job.

There is also an issue as to whether truly effective development can focus exclusively on the public domain and not take account of the private domain that can have such impact on personal effectiveness. The difficulty then for individuals is in making

this private domain public, and how safe this feels, especially where completed PDPs are used for other, public processes.

These apparently philosophical issues of focus and ownership have important practical consequences for PDP schemes, as we shall explore in this chapter.

4.1.2 Individuals' ability to manage their own learning

The literature reveals two views on the ability of individuals to organise their own learning. One view expressed by Abbott and Dahmus (1992), is that individual preparedness will vary with some individuals preferring more traditional 'directed' methods. The other view, supported by Malcolm Knowles (1989) is that all individuals are naturally self-directed learners. In the course of this research, it was often mentioned that some individuals would not participate in PDPs, but this was perceived to be because they were not interested in job or career development at that time (*eg* they were happy with their job, they had reached a career plateau). This may be a reflection of how frequently PDPs are seen as a job or career development tool rather than a personal development tool.

The case studies did show how hard it is to get a PDP initiative established and how much help individuals need to manage their own learning. It must be remembered that most UK employees have little experience of autonomy in their development. Our education system has leant heavily towards 'other directed' learning methods and traditionally work based training has done the same.

> Self-managed learning is, for most individuals, a new experience requiring much effort and considerable support to succeed.

4.1.3 Emergent themes

Against the backcloth of these ideas which underpin the PDP concept, issues of relevance to practitioners are arranged thematically under the following headings:

- scope and content of PDPs
- links with other processes and the focus of the PDP
- implementation and support
- ownership, control and confidentiality
- impact

4.2 Scope and content of PDPs

4.2.1 Employee coverage

From the initial literature search, individual development was seen to be a key component in the creation of the learning organisation. If this is so, then we would expect that individual learning should be encouraged in all employees. The wider the application of individual learning initiatives, the more effective they should be. In our research, none of our case study companies had initiated the use of PDPs as a deliberate step towards becoming a learning company, although several did see it as part of a culture change encouraging self-development. Some also saw PDPs as reinforcing a broader message about taking responsibility in their work. Given these background intentions, one might expect PDP schemes to lend themselves to implementation throughout the workforce.

However, as we have seen, a number of the case study organisations were using PDPs, only for sections of their workforce. This was sometimes a result of the contexts in which PDPs were created (eg management development programmes), and sometimes the consequence of phased introduction which was still incomplete.

A serious practical problem for organisations is in achieving universal penetration of PDPs, by a method which both captures the enthusiasm of users and is viable in terms of costs. This issue is discussed further as one of support (section 4.4).

It is important for organisations to consider both the process of producing PDPs and the level of support on offer in thinking about which parts of the workforce to target. Although it may send mixed cultural messages, a well implemented PDP programme for part of the workforce may be more effective than a poorly supported one aimed at the whole workforce.

4.2.2 Structuring the PDP

Should a PDP be based on structured ideas about types of development needs and types of development actions, or should it be a totally open ended affair — a blank sheet of paper?

In terms of the PDP format, the case studies varied in the extent to which they provided structured headings, under which to place development needs or development actions or both. A relatively unstructured format would appear to be most in tune with allowing individuals the latitude to express their own plan.

However, employees might appreciate guidance notes and structured inputs (*eg* from the kinds of exercises undertaken at development centres) to help their thinking.

The study did provide some evidence from discussions with employees that competence frameworks were perceived as useful aids to thinking about and expressing development, especially when they embraced personal skills.

Computer systems can be used to provide structures for thinking about development by leading the user through various questions and information. This may be especially useful when the PDP is being produced in a 'stand alone' way *ie* not as part of any other HR process. The use of computers, workbooks and other self-help material warrants further investigation by organisations as ways of providing structure to thinking about a PDP.

4.3 Links with other processes and the focus of the PDP

As already indicated at the start of this chapter, a major set of issues were raised about the relationship between:

- the focus of the PDP: current job, career or 'whole person'
- the processes as part of which PDPs are created or which lead on to a PDP (*eg* development centres, workshops, development programmes, appraisal)
- the processes into which the PDP links (*eg* training, other development activity, job filling and succession planning)

4.3.1 Links into PDPs

Looking at focus and inputs to start with, this study has found that the focus and content of a PDP is heavily influenced by the processes which feed into it, or during which it is created. Employees appeared most enthusiastic about schemes which focused on them as people, as contrasted with those that concentrated purely on skills for their current job or next career move. It seemed that such schemes provided greater initial impact and were also more likely to generate visible performance differences. Where PDPs could be generated by a number of methods, individuals commented that a personal development method such as a management development course or a development centre, had greater impact than via an inevitably job centred appraisal scheme. This impact may result from a combination of simply spending more time on the PDP, or having more support in discussing it, or the stronger emphasis on reflection and self-understanding which is often lacking in appraisal schemes.

The real problem for organisations is that these high impact methods are expensive and therefore tend to be used selectively. The challenge is how to reach the greatest number of individuals in a way that makes a real impact. For some organisations there will also be cultural barriers. Where there is a generally held

belief that development should focus only on the job that individuals are paid to do, the organisation is unlikely to be comfortable with a person centred approach. It is easy to end up sending rather confusing messages about focus, and care is needed to get the balance right.

Organisations should also look at cheaper ways of providing some of the advantages of the development centre approach to PDPs.

After all a development centre only provides structured insight into one's own skills and a chance to discuss development in some depth. A combination of tests, exercises, and discussion could be provided via workshops and self-study material (including computer based materials), perhaps backed by support from an action learning set.

Indeed, one of the case study organisations had experimented with the use of a computer programme to help employees structure their thinking and reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, prior to the development discussion with their line manager. Although time consuming, the package was used and appreciated by many users. Line managers appeared more sceptical about it than the employees who were interviewed.

PDP schemes originating in appraisal will frequently require from individuals a change in orientation from being *other* directed to being *self* directed. The traditional appraisal has been line manager led, or at best held in partnership. Line managers have used appraisal to convey feedback to the individual. To then switch to a development plan owned by the individual will in many instances involve a change in ownership between the appraisal process and the PDP.

The link between appraisal and the PDP is likely to feel smoother if the appraisal also shifts to become more employee owned, by placing a stronger emphasis on self-assessment.

Successful appraisal based PDP schemes seemed to involve a more energetic launch which consciously prepared individuals and line managers for the shift to employee-led personal development. They also allowed more time to be spent in discussing personal development and focused more on personal qualities, not just current job skills. This may not be possible with an appraisal which also serves the needs of a performance related pay system.

4.3.2 Links out from PDPs

The focus and content of the PDP is not just affected by the processes which feed into it, but also by its anticipated use.

In all the case studies there were clear and expected links between the PDP and access to training courses for individuals. This had also impacted on the design of training courses to better reflect the needs expressed on PDPs. PDPs also linked to other forms of development such as coaching, open learning and project opportunities. For some of the case study organisations this widening of development activity was a key desired outcome.

Two organisations in our sample used PDPs for succession planning. In one it was not at this stage possible to understand its impact on the character of the PDP itself. In the other it seemed that the influence of this link was that the PDP became more like a CV and was used to sell the individual and to specify particular desired job moves. This made the analysis of needs less self-critical and the planned actions weighted towards job moves.

The use of PDPs in the planning of training or job placement also raises issues of confidentiality which are discussed in section 4.5.

Organisations which do not develop any links to other processes can suffer from lack of clarity as to what personal development plans are for.

In one case study, with a strong performance culture, users mentioned that reward should be linked to the PDP because of the effort individuals expended on it. Obviously there is an expectation that the action plan will be followed up, whether that be through training courses, development moves, coaching or project opportunities. It is not always clear exactly how this is expected to happen. A number of other self-development processes have to be in place for employees to be empowered to take these actions for themselves (Jackson, 1990).

Several of the case study organisations were concerned about handling the career development aspects of PDPs at a time when there was little hope of upward progression. This research would indicate the need firstly to redefine 'career' more widely to embrace experiences other than promotions (*eg* lateral moves, secondments, project working *etc.*). 'Career' also needs to be discussed in its wider context of the development of the individual as a person, and not just as a series of stepping stones. To retreat from the problems of 'career' by focusing purely on current job is not likely to resolve these issues for the employee.

4.4 Implementation and support

The introduction of PDPs present an enormous practical challenge to the organisation, which is often under-estimated. Support is needed in:

- launching the initial implementation
- helping individuals actually produce their plans
- maintaining momentum.

4.4.1 Launching PDPs

PDP approaches which take place in other structured processes, such as development centres, do not require a complex launch.

> PDP approaches which are designed to stand alone or form part of a new approach to appraisal, will often require communication with all employees and managers. This needs to cover not just the mechanics of the scheme but its rationale and place in cultural change (see section 4.1).

Some organisations simply fail to plan and support this initial implementation.

The role of the HR function in getting a PDP scheme introduced is not always straightforward. There are choices about whether it is driven from the corporate centre or more locally, and issues about whether HR can introduce PDPs to local units without the local line management feeling they have some control. In some of the cases where HR was primarily seen as a support function to the line, the process of implementation was determined by seeking agreement from each unit in turn. In others it was driven both more centrally and more by HR.

As with so many HR initiatives, it is easier if top level support is there at the start. Indeed, some of those companies whose employees were most enthusiastic about PDPs were those where there was top level involvement. In several cases the Board had been involved in the decision making process, either at the policy formulation stage or in the scheme design, and in some cases the chief executive had been directly involved in the move towards personal development.

However, this top down approach is not the only route. In some of the case study organisations the introduction had happened very quietly without such high level approval in the beginning. In these, the schemes were allowed to develop quietly before being formally launched and top level support was fostered after the event. From these observations it would seem that top level support is not essential before PDPs are launched. The approach taken will depend strongly on the cultural context of the organisation, and the degree of support or resistance that such a development initiative is likely to have. In two of our case study companies which were using management development programmes to create PDPs, senior level commitment was gained in part by the attendance of these people on a senior management development programme.

4.4.2 Supporting individuals

We have already seen that individuals may need practical help in completing a PDP, especially the first time.

Obviously this is there at development centres and management programmes. In the case of stand alone or appraisal based systems, it is dangerous to assume that individuals do not need any help or that line managers can provide all the help they need.

Initial training and guidance material play a part, but other more detailed self-help tools (whether computer or paper based) and some kind of help-line may also be needed. Local HR staff may also play a crucial role. Again there was a real difference between organisations which anticipated this need and planned it as part of implementation, and those which hoped PDPs would not need serious support.

4.4.3 Maintaining momentum

Although providing support at the start of the scheme required planning, maintaining the momentum of the scheme proved the more difficult problem in practice. Central HR departments often introduce schemes but then withdraw. Individuals and managers may need practical help and encouragement to follow up PDP actions and to review and revise plans. It is all too easy for the individual and the line to lose enthusiasm and commitment.

Some organisations had handed their schemes to individuals and departments to manage after the initial introduction; either because the role of HR in the organisation was facilitating rather than operational, or because of a philosophical belief that self-organised learning must be managed by the individual, and pushing/policing from the centre is contrary to this philosophy. Most of the employees we spoke to mentioned that maintaining commitment was a problem. As we have seen, of all the many development initiatives, PDPs offer the least integral support to, and control of, the learning process and it is therefore unsurprising that maintenance is difficult.

In some organisations the schemes were in danger of decline, because individuals were not encouraged by their line managers to use the PDP approach. This indicated to them that completing a PDP was not valued. They also failed to see any benefit of completion and, as many managers had only asked to see completed PDPs when the scheme was first introduced, they believed that this was one thing they could let slide. This contrasted with other organisations where users were initiating development discussions with their line managers, who were themselves supportive of the scheme. Such differences may well

be due to the different approaches taken to the introduction of the personal development initiative, and to the actions individuals and the line perceive as flowing from producing a PDP. If support is not there to take action resulting from a PDP, then employees will quickly take a cynical view.

Even if not involved right at the start, top level support may be important in maintaining momentum through backing the scheme, both by personal participation and resources.

> All schemes require a source of energy to keep the momentum going. Placing this with either the individual or the line manager, without some kind of organisational link (*eg* appraisal system, support through mentors or groups, some system of review and update) makes it very difficult for this energy to be maintained.

This may be part of the reason that PDPs have greater impact when completed in a high energy setting such as a development workshop or management development setting. It may also be why schemes linked with appraisal were more common in the case studies than those which were truly stand alone. Line managers appear to find it difficult to put energy into a PDP scheme if they are unclear as to its place in a wider approach to employee development.

4.5 Ownership, control and confidentiality

Some important dilemmas of ownership and control emerge when an initiative, designed to help employees take charge of their own development, is introduced by the organisation they work for. Some of these have already surfaced as issues of focus — for example, why should an employing organisation encourage employees to think about the full range of their life/work issues, if the organisation is primarily interested in short-term performance improvement in the current job?

Three other key questions are:

- should organisations insist that individuals complete a PDP?
- should organisations monitor take-up of PDPs?
- should completed PDPs be confidential?

Some of the case study organisations did not in any way seek to monitor or control the use of their PDP scheme. Once designed and launched it was up to individuals whether they chose to use it. In contrast, others had made the completion of a PDP close to compulsory. Some collected completed PDPs so that training needs or succession plans could be formulated. Others did not have any collection of completed PDPs, leaving it to individuals to share and action their plans in their own way. The lack of

agreement on these issues of ownership and control point to some real tensions for organisations in a process so central to employee self-development.

Taking first the issue of whether PDPs can be compulsory, the simple answer is 'no'. They cannot be and, in any case, should not be.

Being told you MUST develop yourself and, moreover, must do so by filling in a certain form, is a contradiction in terms.

However, most of the case study organisations strongly encouraged the completion of a PDP, often by linking it with other processes (especially annual appraisal). They also used support as a form of encouragement. Most did not want this encouragement and support to detract from the process being employee-owned. The line managers interviewed were often painfully aware of the problems of trying to persuade unconvinced employees to produce and use a PDP.

The issue of monitoring is an interesting barometer of how much control organisations are really willing to give up in espousing self-managed learning. One can argue — and several cases did — that monitoring take-up is important to evaluation of the effectiveness of the scheme. However this is not strictly true. Random confidential surveys (including existing attitude surveys) could be used to estimate take-up without setting up processes for recording whether each employee has completed a PDP or not. A few of the case studies felt strongly that PDP schemes should not be monitored in this way, as it smacks of taking back control over a process the organisation has passed to its employees.

It may be better to think about how the scheme is to be evaluated — in terms of impact not just take-up — rather than to set up bureaucratic approaches to recording how many PDPs have been completed.

The issue of confidentiality is critical.

We have already seen that PDPs which feed into management's decisions about people, for example job filling and succession planning, change their nature as a result of this intended use. Who is going to confess to weaknesses on a PDP which functions largely as a CV? Certainly not some of the individuals interviewed in organisations which made this link. It is fine to have inputs from individuals into such processes, but we cannot deceive ourselves that these will be PDPs in the real sense of the term.

In any scheme where the line manager has a critical role, honesty is also dependent on the quality of relationship of the

employee with their line manager. Encouragingly, in most of our case study organisations, individuals and managers believed that it was acceptable to discuss development needs on a one-to-one basis in the context of their culture.

4.6 Impact

This study was not large enough to conduct any independent assessment of impact, but the case study organisations were asked what they felt the impact of PDPs had been and whether any evidence of impact was available. The impact which the case study organisations wanted to see from personal development planning was predominantly the culture change away from the organisation owning individual development, towards employees feeling they were responsible for their own development. In some cases, attitudinal measures were starting to register such a shift. Other outcomes sought, included a more adventurous approach to development methods, usually away from courses to more job-related approaches, including more lateral job moves. Some of the individuals interviewed had grasped the opportunity to pursue these broader types of development. Some of the organisations also saw evidence of this change. The employees and managers participating in the research were mainly enthusiastic about the PDP approach, and its link with business development.

> As always with HR processes, however, few of even this vanguard group had really evaluated their schemes. For some it was still too early to have done so.

4.7 Lessons for practitioners

In conclusion, what tips can this study suggest to those introducing a PDP scheme?

- The key outcomes sought from introducing PDPs — including cultural change — need to be clear to all those involved, and built in at every stage of design and implementation.
- The introduction of the scheme — whether 'big bang' or 'softly, softly' — should take account of the target group and the prevailing attitudes to employee development.
- The process used to generate plans must be realistic in terms of the target group of employees and the level of resources available to the scheme.
- If PDPs are expected to flow out of appraisal, then the design of the appraisal scheme should take this into account by building in sufficient time for discussion of individual development.

- PDPs which focus solely on skill development for the current job, will not be welcomed by many employees. Those which take a broader view of the individual and their future, may be more effective in encouraging flexibility and have a higher impact on employees.
- Frameworks (including competences) and instruments for assisting in self-assessment (including psychometric tests) can be very valuable in helping employees to think about their PDPs. However, the PDP form itself should not be too highly structured, as this will constrain the user.
- If the organisation really wants employees to own their own development, it will have to achieve a critical balance between encouragement and control.
- Formal use of PDPs in other processes such as selection or succession planning, will affect the content and confidentiality of the plans, and therefore should be carefully considered.
- A PDP scheme will not sell itself or maintain itself. A planned and realistic approach to supporting the scheme is crucial. This has cost implications.

Appendix A

Section A: Background and Context

A1: General information about the organisation

Name of Company
- Name(s) of people we interview
- Business/sector
- Which bits of the business will we be talking about?
- No. of employees — total and in parts covered by this interview

A2: Context to introduction of PDPs

When were PDPs first introduced?
Why go for PDPs?
- What else was going on in employee development at that time?
- Were they a part of a self-development strategy?

Who championed the idea?
Is the scheme we will be talking about today the original one?
- If it has evolved, brief history of phases of development, especially changes if any in coverage and approach.

Section B: Design of the Current PDP Scheme

B1: Coverage

Who is intended to have a PDP? (part of org., job types)
Is completing a PDP optional?
Is there data on who the scheme is used for in practice and take-up?

B2: Content

How is the PDP constructed *ie* the design of the form
(REQUEST BLANK FORM)
Are there fixed headings? — if so what are they in detail
How does it look at skills? (*eg* does it use competences)
What is it intended to cover — job/career/whole person?
What kinds of learning actions do staff actually record (any analysis?)

B3: Process

When is a PDP produced?
- Who starts the process?
- Does it come out of other processes? (appraisal, assessment or development centres *etc.*)
- How often is it updated?

Roles of employee/manager/others in writing and agreeing plan
- Do they get held from others (*eg* mentors)
- Is it formally agreed/signed off?
- Who sees it?
- Where is it held (computerised?)

Who is responsible for actioning it?
- Does anyone help action/monitor or follow up?
- Do any resources for development come to the employee?

Does the PDP link in with any other development processes?
- *eg* succession, development programmes, access to training *etc.*

Section C: Implementation and Support

C1: Implementation

Who agreed to the programme? (*eg* did the board know?)
Was it piloted or launched with a big bang?
Who designed it?
What was needed to implement it?
- info. packs, training for managers and employees

Cost of design and implementation

C2: Support

What is the on-going support offered now?
- line manager training?
- advice from personnel function? (who?)
- how much resource does it now take?

Section D: Impact and Evaluation

Do PDPs feed into any other processes?
Were any objectives/targets set for the PDP scheme?
Has there been any monitoring of the scheme?
- take up, impact *etc.*

If there has been some formal evaluation, what does it show?
- take up
- types of development actions proposed

satisfaction with the process (staff, managers)
use made by staff of the process
ability to follow up development actions
measurable impact on career moves, training, attitudes?

If there has been no formal evaluation, what is the personnel function's perception on the list above?
Would you say that the scheme has succeeded in terms of its reasons for introduction?

Section E: Reflections, Wider Issues and the Future

Do PDPs as a general idea have a major contribution to make to development?

How would you answer some of the questions raised about PDPs?
are they just a gimmick?
do employees take them seriously?
will managers really help?
do they really meet business needs?
what happens when org changes (layers, downsizing)
are actions possible to follow up?

gives more training to those who would get it anyway? (equal opps issues)
other pros and cons
culture issues

What are the pros and cons of the way your organisation has gone about it?
if changes have been made along the way, why?
what would you do differently if you were starting again?
Are you considering changes to your scheme (what and why)?
What advice would you give to a company thinking of using PDPs?

Appendix B

Visited Cases

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Focus	Person	Job; Career; Person	Career	Job; Career	Person	Job; Career	Job; Career; Person
Who	Managers	Managers	Managers	All	All	Manager Clerical	Manager Clerical
Framework	16PF. Firo B OPQ. Watson Glaser. 360° review.	OPQ as 360° review. Competences.	Schein's career anchors; 360° review will be competence. Learning styles	Competence	Not competence	Skill lists	Competence. OPEN concepts computer package – skills/ interests/values. Learning styles
Roles & Resources	Manager. Employee. Mentors. Peers.	Employee & Manager.	Employee. Manager.	Employee. Manager.	Employee. Manager. Mentors on devt prog.	Employee. Manager. (Mentors).	Employee. Manager.
Who established the scheme	Personnel Director. Consultant.	TQ Team. HR led. Consultant.	HR led. Steering group. Business School. Briefings.	HR led, semi piloted. Consultant.	HR led.	Team worked.	CE – change programme. Project group. Consultants on software
Means of establishing	Managers' 2 day briefing.	Newspaper briefing. Assessor manuals. Workshop. Informal meeting for devt prog.	Briefing. Brochure. Video.	Newsletter. Packs for managers. Training courses.	Leaflet & letter. Q+A sheet. Local specialists.	Workshops. Letter & booklet. Induction.	Guide. Team brief. Booklet. Video. Newspapers. Piloted.
Ongoing support	Cascade. Briefing day.	Manuals. Workshop. Coaching/ training.	HR advice. Appraisal. Training.	Manual & guide. Workshops. HR advice.	Leaflet. Q+A sheet. Manual. HR advice.	Workshops. Induction.	Hotlines – USA. Coaching course. Booklet. HR advice.
Linkages in	Development event.	Appraisal. Devt Workshops (2 kinds).	Development event.	Appraisal. Development centre.	Development event. Appraisal.	Appraisal.	Appraisal. Development centre.
Linkages out	No formal links.	Succession planning.	Succession planning. Placements. Job moves. Task forces.	Lateral job moves.	Job swaps.	Succession planning (indirect).	Job posting.
Evaluation	Drop out rate. Cultural change. Attendance.	Too soon.	Lateral moves. International moves. 360° review. Results. Team working.	Not monitored.	Attitude survey.	Attitude survey. Project work. Take-up of central courses.	Too soon.
Learning points	Complex. Need right attitude and skills. Support crucial. Individual must be ready.	Must have support structures. Need top down commitment. Take time.	What next? Framework helps. Inspirational programme. Cascade brought commitment.	Need top level support. Competences help. Managers resistant. Where next? More resource.	Hard work. Choose ambassadors. Integrate initiatives.	Take time. Position in the line. Downsizing increases relevance.	Managers' coaching ability is a limitation.

Telephone Interview Cases

	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Focus	Depends on individual.	Job; Career.	Unclear as yet.	Job.	Job; Career.	Person; Job.	Person; Career. Job.
Who	All.	Manager.	All.	Manager.	All.	All.	All.
Framework	Competence.	Competence.	Competence.	Learning styles. Competence.	Competence.	Learning styles. Competence.	Competence.
Roles & Resources	Employee 1°. Manager 2°.	Employee. Manager. Mentors for graduates.	Employee 1°. Manager.	Employee 1°. Manager.	Employee. Manager. Mentors for graduate prog.	Employee1°. Manager.	Employee Mentors
Who established the scheme	HR led. Working party.	HR led. Board involvement.	HR led. Board approved working party.	HR led. Management team.	Training & Pers led. Board appointed consultants.	Training led. HRD Board approved consultant.	HR led. Consultant.
Means of establishing	Manager briefs. HR briefs.	Info pack. Workshops. Cascade.	Training to all.	Info packs. Manager and employee training.	Info packs. Presentations to top managers. Workshops.	Half day workshop. Cascade.	Cascade.
Ongoing support	Via career development process.	Cascade training.	Training. Guidelines. Hotline.	Workshops.	Workshops. HR advice.	Workshops. Cascade.	HR advice. Mentors.
Linkages in	Appraisal. Development centre.	Appraisal.	Appraisal.	Appraisal.	Appraisal.	Appraisal.	Development centre.
Linkages out	Too soon.	Too soon.	Too soon.	Too soon.	Too soon.	Career moves.	Succession planning.
Evaluation	Too soon.	Too soon.	Too soon.	Too soon.	Too soon.	Too soon.	Too soon.
Learning points	Flexible non-bureaucratic. Employee driven. Involve line. Network.	Avoid initiative overload.		Competence framework may lead to distrust.	Need committment and ownership from line and centre.	Convince others. Working groups.	Do not neglect role of line as mentors. Need to sell PDPs.

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P Tamkin, L Barber, W Hirsh

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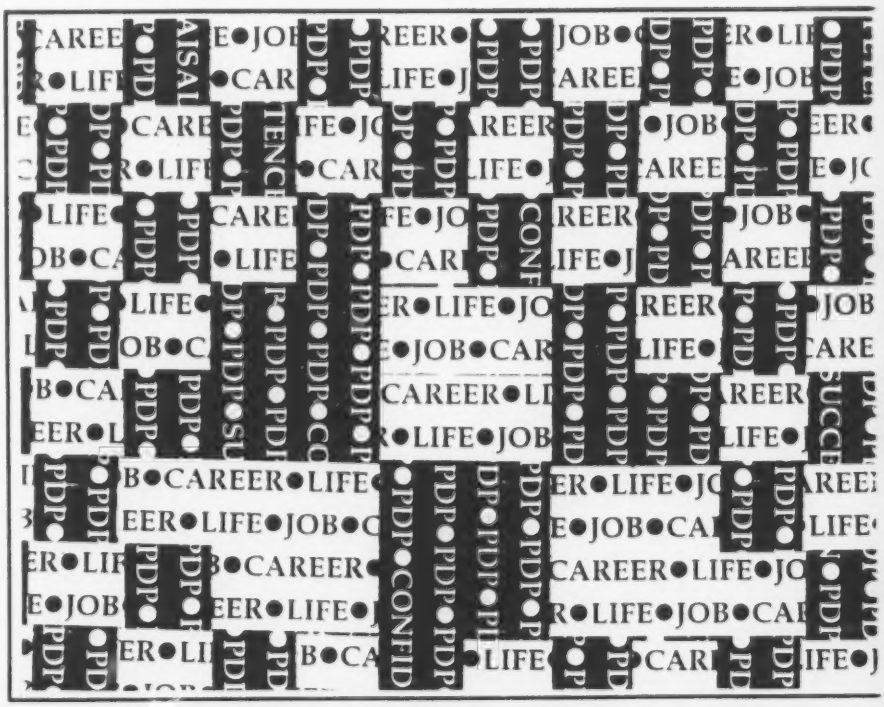
Personal Development Plans are rapidly gaining in popularity as a tool for encouraging employees to think through their own development needs and action plan for their careers and skill development. This report, based on case study research of leaders in this field, gives practitioners clear descriptions of what PDPs really are, how they fit it with other HR processes, and how they are working in practice. The eight named case studies include TSB, BP Chemicals, Marks and Spencer and Abbey National. The report also raises some wider policy issues and choices in using PDPs as part of a strategy of self-development.



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